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Chairman: Ms. Anguiano Rodriguez (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Mexico)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Anguiano Rodriguez (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 32: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Thomson** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and, in addition, Liechtenstein, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that United Nations peacekeeping had evolved considerably since the Brahimi recommendations of 2000. The past two and a half years, in particular, had seen an unprecedented surge in activity. Five new United Nations peacekeeping operations and the reinforcement of existing missions had doubled the number of troops and police deployed to almost 70,000, and the figure continued to rise as the United Nations Mission in the Sudan deployed. The European Union commended the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the manner in which it had dealt with the surge in activity, in partnership with troop and police contributors. The European Union also reaffirmed its own enduring commitment to the maintenance of peace, both through its financial contribution of over 40 per cent of the assessed peacekeeping budget and through its deployment of troops and police to peace missions.

2. The evolution had been more than quantitative. As peacekeeping operations had become increasingly multidimensional. That had highlighted the need for a more integrated approach and a greater degree of civil-military coordination, as well as coordination between the United Nations and other international actors. The World Summit had recognized that evolution and had placed a responsibility on all players to effect the necessary change. The European Union looked forward to making its contribution to that end and wished to highlight four areas that it saw as a priority for the coming 12 months: enhancing the United Nations operational capability; cooperation and capacity-building with regional organizations and actors; building a sustainable peace; and the question of misconduct.

3. The European Union fully supported the World Summit decision to endorse the creation of an initial operating capability for a standing police capacity, which would both provide a start-up capability for the policing component of peacekeeping missions and assist existing missions through the provision of advice and expertise. The European Union looked forward to that concept becoming operational in July 2006.

4. The World Summit had also urged further development of proposals for enhanced rapidly deployable capacities to reinforce peacekeeping operations in crisis. The European Union looked forward to the development of a detailed proposal for consideration at the next session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations; that proposal would need to complement the efforts of the European Union and other regional entities concerning rapid deployment, standby and bridging capacities. As part of that work, the European Union welcomed the comprehensive review of the United Nations Standby Arrangements System announced the day before, with the objective of making it a genuinely usable tool for generating rapidly deployable forces.

5. The events of the past 12 months in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had demonstrated the need for the United Nations to have an effective information-gathering capability at the operational level to ensure the safety and security of its personnel and implement its mandate. It was regrettable that it had still not been possible to implement fully the Joint Mission Analysis Cell concept across all United Nations missions. Now that the Department of Safety and Security had established itself, the European Union would welcome greater clarity on the division of responsibility between it and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at both the operational and the strategic levels.

6. With regard to cooperation with regional organizations and actors, and capacity-building, the Summit had recognized the important contribution of regional organizations to peace and security, and the need to forge predictable relationships with the United Nations pursuant to Chapter VIII of its Charter. The European Union's Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2003 had clearly demonstrated the engagement of the European Union in support of more effective multilateralism through the development of its crisis management capabilities. The vital role played by the African Union mission in

Darfur over the past 12 months had provided a clear example both of the need for such strategic partnerships and of their potential for peace.

7. The European Union was fully committed to the continued development of the EU-UN joint declaration on crisis management. It believed that there was scope for enhanced cooperation and partnership in a range of areas, such as rapid deployment, shared doctrine, planning expertise and training. The dialogue on cross-cutting issues such as the rule of law, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, and gender could also be enhanced.

8. A related issue was capacity-building for the African Union and the African subregional organizations, at the Summit support had been expressed for the development and implementation of a 10-year plan. The European Union was continuing to contribute both to the African Union mission in the Sudan and to wider African Union capacity-building through the Peace Facility, with 98 million euros committed to date. It was essential, however, to ensure that such efforts were coordinated, and above all were delivering what the African Union required.

9. As the World Summit had recognized, development, peace and security and human rights were interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The European Union strongly believed that if a sustainable peace was to be built, peacebuilding activities needed to start from the very outset, alongside traditional peacekeeping activities. Unfortunately, the peacebuilding efforts of the international community had all too often been marked by piecemeal and uncoordinated action, lacking in national ownership, which had eventually resulted in a relapse into conflict. The Peacebuilding Commission, which world leaders at the Summit had agreed to establish, was intended to fill those gaps. The European Union was eager to see the Commission established by the end of the year and trusted that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would play a full role in support of the work of the Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

10. A key element in ensuring more coherent activity in United Nations missions was integrated mission planning. The European Union welcomed the work that was now being taken forward by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs to define a model for integrated planning and strengthen capacity for such planning and thus ensure that the development and humanitarian agencies and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations could plan more effectively together. The European Union also called upon the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to enter into a dialogue with potential troop contributors much earlier in the development of an operation in order to facilitate national military planning and thereby shorten deployment times.

11. Turning to the topic of misconduct, he said that the European Union condemned in the strongest terms all acts of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. It welcomed the recent proposal to amend memoranda of understanding to reflect the responsibilities of troop-contributing countries. However, while there had been some welcome progress, sexual exploitation and abuse remained a significant problem in many missions. Both the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the troop-contributing countries needed to do much more to implement the decisions taken earlier in the year in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, including enforcement of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy. Member States must do their utmost to solve the problem, with transparency. Otherwise, they would be risking the success of the missions and jeopardizing the future of United Nations peacekeeping.

12. A crucial factor in preventing misconduct was capacity-building in the area of human rights and the widespread mainstreaming of gender awareness across peacekeeping missions. Systematic change was needed so that gender issues were included in pre-mission planning and mission implementation, as well as — crucially — in the post-mission phase. The European Union urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to work with the United Nations country team to ensure that, when a peacekeeping mission withdrew, sufficient human rights and gender expertise remained in the country to assist the national Government.

13. Finally, the European Union welcomed the proposal of the Bureau of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations for a more interactive committee process in the coming session, as well as the announcement by the Under-Secretary-General that a review of the structure and operation of the Department

of Peacekeeping Operations would be carried out to ensure that it was equipped and ready for the challenges that lay ahead.

14. **Ms. El Alaoui** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that it was the Movement's consistent position that peacekeeping operations must abide strictly by the guiding principles articulated in the Final Documents of the XI Ministerial Conference in Cairo, the Kuala Lumpur Non-Aligned Movement Summit of 2003 and the Durban Ministerial Conference of 2004 and as set out in paragraphs 22 to 35 of the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/59/19/Rev.1). The Non-Aligned Movement continued to hold that peacekeeping operations should strictly observe the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and those that had evolved to govern peacekeeping and had become basic peacekeeping principles, namely the consent of the parties, the non-use of force except in self-defence and in the defence of a mandate authorized by the Security Council, impartiality, clearly defined mandates and secure financing. It also emphasized the need to maintain respect for the principles of the sovereign equality, political independence and territorial integrity of all States and non-intervention in matters that were essentially within their domestic jurisdiction.

15. The Movement continued to believe that United Nations peacekeeping operations should not be used as a substitute for addressing the root causes of conflict in a coherent, well-planned, coordinated and comprehensive manner, with relevant political, social, economic and developmental instruments. It further maintained that the United Nations should give serious consideration to ensuring that those efforts could continue without interruption after the departure of a peacekeeping mission, so as to ensure a smooth transition to lasting peace, security and development.

16. The Non-Aligned Movement reiterated its longstanding position that the role of regional peacekeeping arrangements should be in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, rather than supplant the role of the United Nations or circumvent the full application of the guiding principles of United Nations peacekeeping. With that understanding, however, the Movement wished to underline the importance of the contribution that regional arrangements could make, and to stress the importance of lending the necessary support to those regional capacities, particularly in Africa, by identifying and implementing practical means for partnerships as reflected in the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/59/19/Rev.1) and as highlighted in the World Summit Outcome. Consequently, it supported the efforts of the United Nations to augment its support to the African Union's endeavours to develop a capacity to undertake peacekeeping operations in Africa. The complementary role of regional arrangements should not, however, lead to the fragmentation of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

17. The Non-Aligned Movement condemned in the strongest terms the killing of peacekeepers in several missions, urging that the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers and associated personnel operating in the field should be accorded the highest priority. Security must not be viewed as a stand alone function or be narrowly defined; rather it had to be seen as a function cutting across all activities, from planning to contingency response, and thus forming an integral part of mandate implementation.

18. The Movement welcomed the continuing emphasis on rapid and effective deployment. There had been significant improvement in recent years, as evidenced by the existence of the Strategic Deployment Stocks and the pre-mandate commitment authority; without those significant innovations it would not have been possible to deploy new missions in recent years.

19. The Movement had been a strong proponent of enhanced cooperation among the troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat. That could be achieved through a better understanding of each other's concerns, in particular, those of the troop-contributing countries, which were best placed to convey a first-hand assessment of the situation on the ground. Troop-contributing countries should be involved early and fully in all stages of mission planning, and there should also be a greater interface with the Security Council, through the reactivation of the Security Council's Working Group of the Whole on Peacekeeping Operations. Moreover, the dialogue between the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat should be intensified so that the Secretariat could report appropriately to the Security Council.

20. The Non-Aligned Movement shared the Secretary-General's deep sense of concern over the cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by United

Nations personnel involved in peacekeeping operations. The distinguished and honourable record of accomplishment in United Nations peacekeeping was being tarnished by the acts of a few individuals. All measures must be adopted to stamp out completely the menace from mission areas. The Movement fully endorsed the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy with regard to the conduct of United Nations personnel, and would work towards the full implementation of the measures adopted in the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

21. Finally, the Non-Aligned Movement wished to pay tribute to the courage and dedication of the personnel working in the field and of those who had lost their lives while upholding the Organization's values and objectives, and it called for a comprehensive study into why so many peacekeepers were being killed in the field.

22. **Mr. Hassan** (Jordan) said that the capacity of the United Nations in the area of the rule of law, both within the Criminal Law and Judicial Advisory Unit in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and in the field needed to be enhanced. His delegation continued to believe that the best approach to the issue would be through an entity within the United Nations Secretariat specializing in the field of the rule of law and transitional justice. The Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office had an important role to play.

23. The members of the Security Council themselves should be doing more to participate in peacekeeping operations, particularly in providing personnel in the field. Furthermore, Security Council intervention should be swift in situations where United Nations peacekeepers were impeded from fully implementing their mandate, or were endangered as a result of such impediments. Of particular concern to his delegation was a situation in which a country hosting a peacekeeping mission undertook unilateral actions that curtailed the fulfilment of the mandate and/or endangered the peacekeepers it was hosting.

24. His Government welcomed the creation of a standing police capacity, and looked forward to contributing to that framework, which had been endorsed in the World Summit Outcome. It also wished to reiterate the importance of adopting the measures outlined in the recommendations of the Secretary-General's adviser on sexual exploitation and abuse. Progress in that area had been seen at the extraordinary meeting of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations held earlier in the year, and his delegation looked forward to further discussions of the achievements and difficulties at its next meeting.

25. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had requested that a comprehensive assessment should be prepared on the potential use of all forms of technical monitoring and surveillance, in particular aerial monitoring capabilities, as a means of ensuring the safety of peacekeepers, particularly in volatile and dangerous conditions and situations too dangerous for visual monitoring from the ground. He would be interested to hear an update from the Under-Secretary-General on the progress made in preparing that assessment, which should be part of the Secretary-General's report for the next meeting of the Special Committee.

26. All Member States should pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions, in a manner that reaffirmed their obligation under Article 17 of the Charter to bear the expenses of the Organization as apportioned by the General Assembly, bearing in mind the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council, as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 1874 (S-IV).

27. **Ms. Alvarez** (Cuba) stressed the importance of respecting the principles which governed the Organization's peacekeeping obligations: consent of the parties, impartiality, the non-use of force except in self-defence, compliance with General Assembly resolutions, a clear mandate and solid funding. Furthermore, in order to maintain the Organization's authority and effectiveness, the Security Council must not act selectively or apply double standards when establishing peacekeeping operations, in particular in Africa.

28. The establishment of peacekeeping operations should not disregard the analysis of the root causes of conflicts, which were usually related to the underdevelopment and exploitation of the third world countries and their exclusion from the international decision-making process. Only the adoption of a comprehensive long-term sustainable strategy could ensure development and put an end to the vicious cycle of conflicts and peacekeeping operations, with their unprecedented human and material costs.

29. The need to provide humanitarian assistance should not be used as a justification for doubtful concepts such as so-called humanitarian intervention when the mandate of peacekeeping operations was defined. Such concepts had their origin in the developed countries and reinterpreted international law, violating the principle of the sovereignty of States and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations in order to serve the interventionist interests of powerful countries which were seeking to impose a world government.

30. Dynamic mechanisms should be developed for establishing and deploying peacekeeping operations but that process must be transparent and inclusive, in accordance with Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations. She noted that developing countries which wished to participate in peacekeeping operations often did not have the necessary capacity, whereas the developed countries had the capacity but not the political will to do so. It was therefore urgent that the Organization should ensure that peacekeeping operations were provided with the resources they required.

31. Cooperation among troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat must be further strengthened. The Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations should hold more frequent meetings with troop-contributing countries, in particular in the initial phases of planning. She called on Member States to pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions, so that troop-contributing countries could be paid in a timely manner; delays in such payments could cause serious economic problems, especially in the developing countries. Finally, she said that peacekeeping operations were not an end in themselves but should create the conditions necessary for sustainable development and a fair and lasting peace.

32. **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the peacekeeping successes of the past five years had affirmed the status and legitimacy of the United Nations as the principal multilateral institution with sole responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Despite the complexity of the role, peacekeeping had proved to be an effective, vital and efficient tool in tackling the dangers to peace and security in various parts of the world. It was not, however, an alternative to the permanent resolution of conflict, but a temporary measure designed to establish a firm basis for the gradual transition to peacebuilding. It was therefore regrettable that United Nations peacekeeping operations had been ongoing for more than half a century in the Middle East, where peace remained elusive owing to Israel's continuing occupation of Arab territories. He paid tribute, however, to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and their good relations with his country.

33. He reiterated the importance of such matters as the need for rapid deployment, the payment of peacekeeping arrears and respect for peacekeeping values, including strict compliance with operational mandates and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, peacekeeping mandates should be clearly credible, viable and legitimate, involving no selectivity or double standards. As for the difficulties facing current and future peacekeeping operations, his delegation was fully prepared to participate in any further discussions for their resolution. He strongly condemned the killing of peacekeepers, whose sacrifice he recognized, and underlined the need to strengthen security measures at the premises of United Nations peacekeeping missions. The establishment of a genuine partnership among the Security Council, the Secretariat and States contributing forces was instrumental to the planning, preparation and organization of missions. Lastly, he requested clarification as to why the web site of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was available in all official languages of the United Nations except Arabic; that was a clear breach of the General Assembly directives concerning the goal of total language parity.

34. **Mr. Løvald** (Norway) said that the recent World Summit Outcome recognized the importance of peacekeeping operations. The capacity of the United Nations to plan, conduct and sustain operations must be reviewed, owing to the increased complexity of mission mandates and the greater number of missions. Many missions did not have adequate resources to supervise the implementation of fragile peace agreements and to deal with armed groups which threatened both peacekeepers and civilians. The planning and operational capacity of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations must therefore be strengthened. He welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's ideas regarding the reorganization of the

Department, but said that the need might not be so much a question of increasing personnel and resources as of making the uniformed component stronger and more visible and ensuring maximum flexibility in the use of existing resources. A tighter military command structure would have operational benefits. Better intelligence at the tactical and operational level was vital, and United Nations personnel must be guaranteed freedom of movement. He noted with concern the increasing tendency to restrict the latter.

35. He endorsed the creation of a standing police capacity and said that the planning element should be strengthened and enhanced assistance should be provided at the start-up of new missions. The Norwegian Police Directorate had recently met with representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to discuss how Norway could assist in the establishment of that capacity. The reform of the security sector in its entirety was a priority, and he stressed the importance of local ownership of the process; to be truly successful, the process must include reform and rebuilding of not only the civilian police but also of the judiciary, the prison service and even the armed forces.

36. Peacebuilding, based on the integrated mission approach, was far more demanding than peacekeeping and the United Nations must continue to play a leading role in the stabilization and rebuilding of failed or failing States. The integrated mission approach must be applied with flexibility, with special attention being given to the need to avoid unnecessarily hindering humanitarian action. He welcomed the decision by the 2005 World Summit to establish a Peacebuilding Commission and a peacebuilding support office, which would further strengthen the integrated approach and involve relevant actors to an even greater extent, both at Headquarters and in the field.

37. In recognition of the contribution to peace and security which could be made by regional organizations, he called for an interlocking system of peacekeeping capacities. His Government was working actively within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to support an enhanced relationship between the latter and the United Nations; that was even more important given the increasingly global engagement of NATO, for example its support of the African Union mission in Darfur. He welcomed the proposed establishment of an African standby force, which his Government was supporting through the United Nations Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG); contacts had likewise been established at both the regional and the subregional levels with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

38. The many initiatives for African capacity-building must be coordinated in order to ensure that resources were used in the most efficient manner. There was also a need to avoid overloading the African Union, whose resources were already stretched owing to its engagement in Darfur. Some capacity-building could be done through the Internet, for example the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) project for African peacekeepers, to which his Government had recently made a financial contribution. His Government had also decided to expand its training for peace programme to the whole of Africa south of the Sahara, focusing on the training of civilian personnel, including police, and, in cooperation with the African Union, the development of a standby capacity for civilian personnel. Further cooperation would also be discussed with ECOWAS and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which were assessing the need for civilian personnel for peace operations.

39. He welcomed the seriousness with which the Organization was addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, but expressed concern about the number of new cases. The conduct of some individuals must not be allowed to undermine the credibility of the Organization. Troop-contributing countries were responsible for informing personnel about United Nations rules and for prosecuting those who broke them; it was unacceptable that United Nations investigators were being hindered in their work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by troop-contributing countries. His Government had contributed US$ 500,000 to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the investigation and prosecution of criminal acts committed by United Nations peacekeeping personnel.

40. The issue of sexual misconduct was closely linked to the wider issue of women, peace and security and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It was important to use available gender expertise more effectively in order to gain a better understanding of the societies and peoples that the peace processes were trying to help. He looked forward to the forthcoming public debate on Security Council

resolution 1325 (2000) in the hope that it would result in constructive suggestions for action, including action in the area of peacekeeping. His Government was strongly committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations in the world community and would increase its civilian as well as military contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

41. **Mr. Chaimongkol** (Thailand) said that conflicts had a tremendous effect on innocent civilians, and that peacekeeping operations played an essential role in creating and maintaining a safe environment in conflict areas. The political will of all parties concerned was, however, the key to successful peacebuilding. He recalled that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, in his recent statement to the General Assembly, had urged all parties to cooperate with the United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

42. A successful peacekeeping operation required that a comprehensive plan encompassing peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding as well as an exit strategy, should be developed before deployment. The cooperation of regional and subregional organizations with United Nations operations was also important and should be given priority and supporting resources should be supplied if necessary. He noted that his Government had made a commitment to the United Nations standby arrangements; it also supported the concept of establishing a standing police capacity in order to restore the rule of law and ensure a timely response to crises. He stressed, however, that the standing police capacity should have the necessary capability to operate effectively in both post-conflict and pre-conflict environments.

43. He reiterated his Government's support for the investigation of sexual exploitation and abuse, including the appointment of national investigation officers from troop-contributing countries to work with the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The Royal Thai Armed Forces provided pre-training courses on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse for troops prior to their participation in peace missions, and strictly prohibited sexual misconduct with the local population; violators would be severely punished.

44. **Mr. Kheong** (Singapore) said that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had performed well in meeting the tremendous challenge of the increase in peacekeeping operations in recent years. That increase had led to a discussion of enhanced capacities and robust peacekeeping in terms of an increase in resources, but he stressed that such resources were not unlimited and that the Organization must be creative in finding sustainable solutions for peacekeeping requirements.

45. Peacekeepers on the whole had served the Organization with courage and dedication, but he expressed disappointment over reports of sexual abuse and misconduct by some peacekeepers in the field; that had damaged the credibility of all peacekeepers as protectors of innocent civilians and stained the reputation of the United Nations. It was urgent to take tough and resolute action to address the problem of misconduct and poor discipline.

46. He supported the five priorities identified by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and welcomed the establishment of Joint Mission Analysis Cells (JMAC), the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), and integrated demobilization, disarmament and reintegration standards, the preparation of strategic deployment stocks and the strengthening of police capacity.

47. During his visits to United Nations peacekeeping missions, he had been struck by the professionalism of many peacekeepers but had noted some frustration at the lack of support and resources. In that context, he said that strong leadership at all levels was essential if peacekeeping missions were to succeed. It was important to select and train senior leaders, including special representatives of the Secretary-General, force commanders and police commissioners early, without waiting for an approved mandate. That would create a pool of senior personnel who could be rotated to observe missions or could be assembled early to build appropriate team dynamics before deployment. Following a mission, they could remain to advise and train others. More resources must therefore be allocated to the training of middle and senior-level leaders who could make a critical difference to the outcome of any peacekeeping operation.

48. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations must strive to achieve better integration across a wide spectrum of agencies. Peacekeepers and peacebuilders were inseparable partners. Their efforts in countries emerging from conflict must be synchronized and their work managed as a single operation, with integrated planning, allocation of resources, training and force

preparations, security management and operations. There must be a greater sharing of information among various stakeholders in order to produce integrated plans for the future.

49. The Department must function responsively, and the ethos of responsiveness to missions must similarly be instilled in other departments, such as the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information and the future Peacebuilding Support Office. The Department's current work processes and structures needed to be critically reviewed and adjusted and better coordination was required. It was vital to improve the structures so that the thousands of peacekeepers on the ground would be provided with appropriate management and support.

50. Peacekeeping missions were successful when they created an environment conducive to local capacity-building. Keeping the peace took time, building national capacities took time, and reconciliation took time. The international community must adopt realistic expectations as to the time-line required to achieve successful peacekeeping, and must be prepared to stay the course.

51. **Mr. Hunger** (Switzerland) welcomed the endorsement by the World Summit of an initial operating capability for a standing police capacity, and initiation by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of a consultation process with troop-contributing countries concerning the establishment of a strategic reserve. The logistical organization of peacekeeping operations needed to be improved and troops must be adequately equipped, especially for peacekeeping operations in Africa. Member States should be encouraged and assisted to transfer unemployed stocks of equipment to those countries which faced difficulties in that area.

52. Sexual abuse and exploitation constituted violations of human rights and damaged the credibility of United Nations missions. A policy of zero tolerance towards such acts must be pursued. He welcomed the deployment of national investigation officers under the authority of the Office of Internal Oversight Services but urged the Department to ensure that members of missions received appropriate training with regard to the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation. Basic training on human rights and international humanitarian law should become a mandatory part of the national training given to all peacekeeping personnel, and he hoped that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations would support that recommendation.

53. There was a general shift from peacekeeping operations to more comprehensive peacebuilding missions. The peacekeeping process involved close interaction between peacebuilding operations and personnel, on the one hand, and key policy domains and actors in the field, on the other. To be successful, therefore, the process had to be led by the national authorities. The Peacebuilding Commission could foster mutual understanding among all actors in the field by clarifying concepts, developing joint strategies, and thus facilitating coordination and greater synergies. The Commission should be a purely advisory body, competent to advise all relevant United Nations entities whenever necessary, while the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would play a crucial role in making the Commission's recommendations operational and implementing them. To perform that role adequately the Department might require additional capacities, as well as improved know-how on civil-military cooperation.

54. The latest session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had been disappointing in terms of both substance and procedure. The Bureau and the members of the Committee should consider ways to improve its working methods. There should be a clear distinction between formal and informal debates, with facilitators elected to facilitate informal discussions on controversial issues. Consideration should also be given to updating the agenda and the structure of the report.

55. **Mr. Kitaoka** (Japan) noted that the budgetary burden of peacekeeping operations on Member States had increased dramatically owing to the expanding number of operations as well as unplanned changes such as extended duration of operations. His country was contributing to both peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding. As one of the largest contributors of financial resources, it urged more effective and efficient performance and vigorous implementation of management reform in the area.

56. Peacekeeping operations were also changing in qualitative terms, for example in their association with peacebuilding. Member States should consider how an effective proposal could be developed from the various options for enhancing rapidly deployable capacities.

One option was to enhance cooperation between missions. Under the chairmanship of Japan, the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping had held a joint meeting with troop-contributing countries and Combined Joint Task Forces. Potential problems concerning the implementation of inter-mission cooperation had been identified, and it would certainly be possible to resolve some of them.

57. The United Nations could support the rapid deployment arrangements of regional organizations by providing training, equipment and other capacity-building assistance to the troops of their member States. It would thus become increasingly possible to deploy regional troops in emergencies. Such efforts might be more effective than the provision of support to regional organizations through other, for example bilateral, channels. He intended to submit a proposal on inter-mission cooperation as a means of effectively enhancing rapidly deployable capacities.

58. The reports of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations had emphasized the need to improve the interaction between troop-contributing countries and the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations. Three joint meetings with troop-contributing countries and Combined Joint Task Forces had been held in the course of the year since Japan had assumed the chairmanship of the Working Group. Those meetings had addressed the establishment of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), sexual exploitation and abuse issues with special attention to the United Nations Observer Mission in the Congo (MONUC), and inter-mission cooperation with a special focus on West African peacekeeping operations.

59. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that it was vital to enhance cooperation among Member States, United Nations agencies and regional organizations in order to prevent and settle armed conflicts and address global problems such as international terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, poverty, disease, environmental degradation and natural disasters. He shared the view that human rights violations and lack of respect for the rule of law represented a threat to peace and security. It was important to remember that, while States themselves had the primary responsibility for the maintenance of security, the international community was also responsible if a State could not protect its own citizens. The global nature of terrorism required an urgent, effective and comprehensive response by the international community, including the strengthening of the international legal framework.

60. The effective mobilization of existing resources and the establishment of a rapid deployment mechanism would play an important role in the success of United Nations peacekeeping efforts. He therefore supported the establishment of the intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission, the standing Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office. His Government regularly advised the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of its willingness to provide elements of its peacekeeping battalion for peacekeeping operations. He supported the concept of a standing reserve of United Nations civilian police and a strategic peacekeeping reserve. The proposal to establish closer cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations which possessed the capacity to prevent conflicts and maintain peace and the proposal regarding the creation of regional centres to train international peacekeepers should be given serious consideration. His Government would be interested in sending its personnel to such training centres on a regular basis. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should actively promote the regional capacity for peacebuilding.

61. Commending the efforts of the Organization to incorporate mechanisms for protecting civilians in armed conflicts into the peacekeeping mandates, he noted that the current armed conflicts were mostly intrastate conflicts, often involving violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It was important that peacekeeping operations should comply strictly with the principles and purposes of the United Nations, in particular the principles of consent by the parties involved and the non-use of force except in self-defence. He was profoundly concerned about the reports of sexual abuse by peacekeepers and welcomed the appointment of an adviser on the issue.

62. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, his country continued to emphasize the principle that the United Nations was responsible for maintaining international peace; peacekeeping operations were one of its main instruments in discharging that responsibility. It welcomed any plan — such as the initiative to enhance the Organization's rapid-deployment capability — aimed at raising the

operational effectiveness of those operations. The representation of States participating in such activities should improve, in keeping with General Assembly resolutions. International peace and security should be promoted in accordance with the basic principles, namely the consent of the parties, the non-use of force except in self-defence, impartiality, and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States. Peacekeeping operations should not be used to deal with the root causes of conflicts, which should be addressed in a coordinated and comprehensive manner through political, social and developmental instruments. The capacity and capability of troop-contributing countries should be enhanced through the exchange of experience, the dissemination of best practices, and training, including the establishment of regional training centres. The contribution of regional arrangements to United Nations peacekeeping operations should be only temporary and should be complementary; they could not absolve the Organization of its responsibility — under its Charter — for the maintenance of peace.

63. No peacekeeping operation tainted by misconduct could be successful. All United Nations personnel must safeguard the Organization's credibility. The Secretary-General, who had taken significant steps against sexual exploitation and abuse, should pay increased attention to the issue of misconduct. His delegation supported the establishment of "conduct and discipline units" at Headquarters and in the field by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It welcomed the report on the elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse (A/59/710) and the investigation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services into allegations of misconduct in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). It encouraged the Department to take into consideration the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/59/661). Some of the punitive measures recommended by the Office, however, should be applied only if allegations were fully substantiated. The honour of troop-contributing countries should not be impugned. He paid tribute to the courage, service and sacrifice of the vast majority of peacekeeping personnel, including civilian police and military observers, whose safety should continue to be a priority.

64. **Mr. Simkin** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of New Zealand and Canada, said that Member States should capitalize on the initiatives welcomed at the recent World Summit, and continue to address sexual exploitation and abuse problems, as well as some technical issues. With regard to the World Summit initiatives, the Peacebuilding Commission was designed to fill a gap. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, roughly half of all the countries that emerged from war lapsed back into violence within five years. The Commission could coordinate international efforts to promote the rule of law, build capacities and ensure a seamless transition from peacekeeping operations to the nation-building phase. Member States had been urged to agree to adopt the modalities for the operation of the Peacebuilding Commission by 31 December 2005. He strongly supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that any State should be able to request the Commission's assistance. Recognition of the responsibility of the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity was another major outcome of the Summit, and the peacekeeping community, represented by the Fourth Committee, should begin the studies, doctrine development and training necessary to give effect to that concept on the ground and endorse early action.

65. The reform of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations could take place only in concert with other Summit initiatives, as part of an integrated and holistic approach to peacekeeping. Integration within the Department and the field missions was crucial, over and above linkages aimed at promoting development and good governance. The concepts of an integrated mission task force (IMTF) and integrated mission planning process (IMPP) had not yet been implemented in a comprehensive manner. Enhanced integration at Headquarters would inevitably lead to enhanced integration in the field, not only through the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) and the Joint Mission Assessment Cell (JMAC), but also in the overall planning and execution of a mission's mandates. Moreover, clear articulation of operational principles and procedures by the Department would improve peacekeeping action as a whole. Doctrinal clarification, based on work related to standardized training modules and reinforced through a terminology development workshop, would spur further development of training activities. Standardized training modules had contributed significantly to the readiness of national military personnel for blue-helmet deployment, but

broader complementary training for police and civilians still remained to be developed. As a result, the vision of a fully integrated mission was unfulfilled. Accordingly, the Department's integrated training service project should be more actively pursued. Furthermore, the development of proposals to enhance the Organization's rapid deployment capability would benefit from the participation of many Member States in the relevant working groups. Lastly, the creation of a standing police capacity would facilitate early integrated planning and provide the necessary expertise in the field during the crucial early months of a mission.

66. The problem of sexual exploitation and abuse was a matter of concern. Persons deployed on United Nations peace operations should be held to the highest standards of conduct and discipline. Vigorous short-term measures should be pursued to maintain the momentum generated by the report on the elimination of such misconduct (A/59/710), building on the steps already taken by the Secretary-General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. A group of legal experts and Member States should discuss longer-term mechanisms to ensure the effective investigation of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and, where appropriate, prosecution. The Department's current focus on gender mainstreaming throughout its operations, in keeping with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), would contribute to the elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the issue of the discriminatory remuneration treatment of staff officers in United Nations missions relative to military observers, police and civilians was an issue that required an expeditious and satisfactory solution. Lastly, in order to improve the quality of personnel provided by Member States for deployment on field missions, particularly as military observers, the tasks to be performed should be identified and appropriate skill profiles should be developed.

67. **Mr. Acharya** (Nepal) said that peacekeeping operations, which had become a main function of the United Nations, had contributed significantly to building the image of the Organization as an effective mechanism for the maintenance of peace around the world. United Nations peacekeepers intervened in war zones to save lives, restore peace and order and pave the way to nation building through reconstruction. The demand for United Nations peacekeepers had surged; more than 80,000 military, police and civilian personnel were currently serving in 18 peacekeeping operations worldwide. Nepal had participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 1958; it had contributed more than 50,000 peacekeepers and was one of the top five troop-contributing countries. The recent World Summit had commended the contribution of United Nations peacekeepers to conflict resolution. The United Nations should continue to play a central role in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The growing number of United Nations peacekeepers killed, however, raised the issue of safety. From mission planning to deployment and operation, every effort should be made to ensure the safety of peacekeepers, and there should be a minimum acceptable casualty limit for each mission. Full medical treatment and speedy repatriation should be available for wounded or sick United Nations peacekeepers. Moreover, timely disbursement of budgeted funds, the prompt reimbursement of expenses incurred by troop-contributing countries and adequate coordination between field activities and Headquarters were essential for the success of peacekeeping missions.

68. The Security Council, troop-contributing countries and host countries should cooperate closely. The Security Council should have a permanent and transparent mechanism to ensure the participation of troop-contributing countries in decision-making at all stages, from planning through the winding-up phase. The percentage of senior management posts at Headquarters and in the field staffed with officers from troop-contributing developing countries should be increased. His delegation supported the proposal for an enhanced rapidly deployable capacity and believed that the strategic reserves concept introduced by the Department merited serious consideration.

69. The cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by a few members of United Nations peacekeeping missions, had tarnished the image of those missions and his delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy and the recommendations contained in the report on the subject (A/59/710). Lastly, in order to avoid a relapse into violence, follow-up on a peacekeeping operation should be built into the modalities for the Peacebuilding Commission.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

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Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 24 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Anguiano Rodriquez (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Mexico)
later: Mr. Gerts (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Netherlands)

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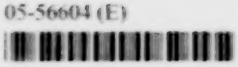

In the absence of Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan), Ms. Anguiano Rodriguez (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 32: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

1. **Mr. D'Alotto** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, reiterated the Group's commitment to international peace and security and acknowledged the contribution of peacekeeping operations to that end. The completion of several missions testified to the success of the United Nations in its search for the consolidation of the goals of the Charter of the United Nations, although ongoing operations showed that greater efforts by the international community might yet be required. The States members of the Rio Group attentively followed the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and trusted that their bilateral and multilateral support for the Mission would contribute to economic and social development in Haiti.

2. During the discussions at the recent High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, States had also stressed the need to mount operations with adequate capacity to counter hostilities and fulfil specific mandates. The Rio Group believed it was vital to analyse various options for rapid deployment. It appreciated the importance of regional organizations to peacekeeping, and took note of proposals to reorganize the tasks of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. There was an urgent need for dialogue and ongoing coordination between that Department and other departments of the United Nations, particularly the Department of Public Information, and for greater focus on the gender perspective in field activities.

3. On the subject of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers, he hoped that firm measures would be adopted, with special emphasis on preventive aspects, and reiterated that it was the responsibility of persons in leadership positions to provide ongoing guidance to personnel. He called for the lifting of the veil of silence that protected those illicit acts and urged the international community to accord greater priority to assisting victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

4. With reference to financial issues, he said that the Rio Group acknowledged improvements in the timing of reimbursements for contingent-owned equipment and troops and the processing of claims, but regretted that there had been undue delays in some areas and that the United Nations remained indebted for operations that had in some instances already closed more than a decade earlier. He called on the Secretariat to provide information on the creation of a working group to examine the difficulties of troop-contributing countries to fulfil the requirements of rapid deployment, including prompt reimbursement in the rapid deployment phase. Timely reimbursement might provide a mechanism that would allow the Organization to be more effective and responsive.

5. Lastly, he paid tribute to the courage of the men and women who worked as peacekeepers, especially those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

6. **Mr. Castro** (Brazil) said that the World Summit Outcome had provided a timely guideline for the priorities and challenges of peacekeeping which faced the international community. The strengthening of rapid deployment mechanisms would benefit from a debate to assess the various options and to tackle a number of other equally important issues.

7. Cooperation with regional organizations was another current issue of importance and his delegation recognized the advantages of maintaining a close relationship, in the maintenance of peace and security. He commended the work of the Organization of American States in registering voters in Haiti, and in organizing elections, in coordination with MINUSTAH. For its part, Brazil had made a significant donation to the project responsible for the elections, and had invested in other structural areas such as agriculture, health, food security and institution-building.

8. The role of peacekeepers in serving affected population groups and in post-conflict situations had increased markedly in recent years. Building sustainable peace was a strenuous task that entailed consideration of the root causes of conflict.

9. With regard to the regrettable cases of sexual abuse and exploitation in peacekeeping operations, he said that his delegation looked forward to the results of the inquiry being conducted by the task force on sexual abuse and exploitation.

10. As for the financial aspects, he said that it must be feasible for countries to contribute to peacekeeping and thereby ensure that it was a successful instrument of peace. The proposal submitted by the Rio Group on rapid disbursement was one option to that end.

11. He reasserted Brazil's active commitment to peacekeeping operations, which dated back to 1947, and said that it had substantially increased its contributions in order to meet emerging needs, because it believed that the best way to solve international disputes was through multilateral means.

12. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) paid tribute to the work of United Nations peacekeepers and highlighted their role in the maintenance of peace and security, in preventing and containing conflicts, in promoting compliance with international norms and decisions, and in peacebuilding in post-conflict situations. Pakistan was proud of being one of the largest and most consistent contributors to United Nations peacekeeping and was currently involved in 11 missions.

13. The United Nations must be given credit for having adapted to the changing nature of conflicts while maintaining its original noble objectives. Pakistan strongly supported the call by the Non-Aligned Movement and other Member States for strict observance of the basic principles of the consent of the parties, impartiality and the non-use of force except as mandated by the Security Council. The United Nations was increasingly addressing complex crises and situations through integrated missions. Mandates of complex missions were becoming as diverse and expanded as the comprehensive peace agreements those missions were asked to help implement. For the Organization to face the challenges involved in effectively carrying out its tasks, continued innovation and improvement in all fields, including planning, command and control, force projection and deterrence, were crucial. The recommendations made in the Brahimi report (A/55/305-S/2000/809) and by the Special Committee, and more recently, the vital decisions taken at the 2005 World Summit, including the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission, must be followed through.

14. It was encouraging that the rules of engagement had been strengthened. Adequate resources must be provided. The surge in the demand for professional and experienced personnel presented a major challenge and all Member States should provide full political and financial support to the Organization to meet that challenge. His delegation supported a stronger relationship between the United Nations and the regional organizations. Stressing the importance of triangular cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat, he referred to developments in inter-mission cooperation involving the redeployment of forces and expressed regret that troop-contributing countries had not been properly consulted on the matter.

15. His delegation was fully committed to upholding the zero tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse, and believed that accountability extended to commanders and managers alike. He expressed appreciation for the efforts that had been made to implement the recommendations of the Special Committee, and stressed the need for improved coordination and consultation with Member States.

16. Given the volatile and dangerous conditions under which peacekeepers performed their duties, the need to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers could not be overemphasized. Timely field intelligence was also important. In that context, he welcomed the development of a comprehensive policy on joint operations and joint mission analysis cells.

17. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) welcomed the new countries that were contributing troops and police to the many peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations. The role of peacekeeping had evolved over the past six decades, from one of monitoring and observing security situations to one that required undertaking more multidimensional responsibilities. Mandates now often included responsibilities deemed essential for laying the foundations of a lasting peace, such as: the stabilization of the situation on the ground and the protection of civilians; support for humanitarian assistance; the organization of elections; assistance in the development of political structures; engagement in judicial and security sector reform; and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

18. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding were now complementary; neither could succeed without the other. Peacekeeping was a prelude to peacebuilding activities that were crucial in order to prevent post-conflict societies from relapsing into chaos and violence. Peacebuilding could not, however, be a substitute for addressing the root causes of conflict.

Sustainable peace could be achieved only by providing people with the means for their livelihood, that would lead to sustainable development.

19. His delegation had from the outset supported the establishment of the proposed Peacebuilding Commission. The Commission should start operating in a country as soon as a peacemaking mission was in place. Careful planning was needed to develop a distinct strategic vision for each mission that delineated the respective roles of the international community and the host society.

20. Peacekeeping operations should continue to conform strictly to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The basic peacekeeping principles, namely, the consent of the parties, the non-use of force except in self-defence and in defence of a mandate authorized by the Security Council, and impartiality should be strictly observed.

21. His country was in favour of the United Nations providing support for peacekeeping operations carried out by the African Union.

22. The safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers was of paramount importance, and his delegation condemned the killing of peacekeepers that had occurred in some missions. He welcomed the decision of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to adopt an integrated approach in that respect in collaboration with the Department of Safety and Security. It was crucial to improve the capacity for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information in real time. His delegation hoped that further improvements to the mechanisms of the Joint Mission Analysis Cells and Joint Operations Centres would enhance the capacity of missions to meet their safety and security needs.

23. The rapid and effective deployment of peacekeepers was essential for successful intervention in crisis situations. Strategic deployment stocks and pre-mandate commitment authority had proved useful in that regard. His delegation was open to all ideas that would enhance the deployment capacity of United Nations peacekeeping operations. It therefore welcomed proposals for the establishment of a standing police capacity and a strategic reserve force. Such a force should not, however, in any way affect regular deployment in peacekeeping missions, as that could curtail their ability to fulfil their mandate.

24. It was a matter of profound regret that the accomplishments of thousands of peacekeepers over the past decades had been marred by allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by some peacekeepers. His country supported and was in compliance with the zero tolerance policy in dealing with such issues. Military and civilian peacekeepers alike must have the confidence of the people they were assigned to protect. His delegation welcomed the initiative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to launch an integrated training service that would include training on matters relating to sexual exploitation and abuse.

25. Sincere and sustained consultations among the Security Council, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and troop-contributing countries were essential for mounting and sustaining successful peacekeeping missions. Troop-contributing countries, which were best placed to assess the situation on the ground, must be involved in all stages of mission planning.

26. His country's long-standing commitment to United Nations peacekeeping remained unflinching. It emanated from its conviction that development could take place only in a society that was free from violence.

27. **Mr. Rampangilei** (Indonesia) said there had been evident improvements in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the five years following the issuance of the Brahimi report, although much remained to be done. Given the dynamic changes that had taken place, the time was now ripe to re-examine it. For example, the report was based on the understanding that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would launch only one large mission a year, whereas four such missions had been launched in 2004 alone. The time had come to synthesize the lessons learned into a body of knowledge and guidance for United Nations peacekeeping, so as to help to structure training and prepare peacekeepers for work in the field. Accordingly, his delegation was pleased to learn that the integrated training service, by which the United Nations would ensure consistent, thorough training for all peacekeeping personnel, would be implemented within the next six months. A career structure similar to the one established in the United Nations Secretariat should be developed to consolidate peacekeeping as a set of specialized skills and to enhance its practice.

28. The value of enhanced partnership in United Nations peacekeeping was receiving greater recognition. It was important to explore all aspects of multilateral partnership and coordinate them effectively in order to ensure full use of the potential of each partner.

29. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations needed to be reorganized to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. His delegation welcomed the suggestion of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations that integrated and cohesive teams should be established in the Department to direct and support field operations. Since resource constraints would always be an issue, it was necessary to be innovative in determining priorities and allocating resources. His delegation welcomed the collaboration between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in the elaboration of the framework for the standing civilian police capacity; it hoped that outstanding issues concerning the military strategic reserve force and the Standby Arrangements System would be resolved shortly.

30. Peacekeeping would always require effective, sustained cooperation and interaction between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and command on the ground. Advantage should be taken of the readiness of regional organizations to assist in peace operations, since they were familiar with their regions and were close to crisis areas; the mechanism for such cooperation should, however, be very clear.

31. Lastly, he called on troop-contributing countries to take adequate action to ensure there were no more instances of sexual misconduct by peacekeepers.

32. **Mr. Tachie-Menson** (Ghana) said that peacekeeping played a pivotal role in the maintenance of international peace and security, one of the cardinal mandates of the United Nations. Accordingly, it was necessary to use a transparent process to recruit personnel with the highest qualifications to occupy key posts. More needed to be done to redress the heavy imbalance in favour of the developed countries among senior-level field appointments. His delegation had grave concerns about recent attempts to introduce new selection criteria for some posts without consultations with troop-contributing countries, and about apparent selectivity in their implementation.

33. Peacekeeping was part of a continuum, rather than an end in itself. It facilitated an atmosphere conducive to good governance and socio-economic development. His delegation strongly supported the focus on an integrated approach, which sought to incorporate peacebuilding measures at the beginning of a peacekeeping mission. A well-coordinated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component contributed enormously to the realization of sustainable peace.

34. Regional and subregional organizations had a vital role to play in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. With the establishment of the African Union's Peace and Security Council, African countries had shown their determination to overcome the conflicts that had bedeviled the region. While the assistance extended by the United Nations and development partners was welcome, further cooperation was needed to enable the African Union to assume its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security on the continent, so as to enable the region to realize its socio-economic potential and assume its rightful place in the global arena. In that regard, the training of troops and the standardization of equipment for the proposed five subregional African standby brigades required urgent attention.

35. His delegation supported the call for the establishment of a standing civilian police capacity, but cautioned that the selection should be fair, transparent, and based on the Organization's principles. It also endorsed the decision regarding formed police units, but again stressed that the meagre financial resources of most developing countries could inhibit their desire to implement the decision; they might require assistance to address inadequate logistical capabilities.

36. The improper conduct of United Nations peacekeepers should be strongly condemned and realistic measures should be taken to prevent any recurrence. The current focus on the misconduct of a few peacekeeping personnel should not, however, divert attention from other important operational issues. The recent unprovoked attacks on a number of African peacekeepers in Darfur had renewed concern for the safety of field personnel.

37. *Mr. Gerts (Netherlands), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

38. **Mr. Shin** Kak-soo (Republic of Korea) said that the unprecedented surge in the number and scope of

peacekeeping operations in recent years was seriously overstretching the resources and abilities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The nature of peacekeeping had become more complex and multidimensional and, in consequence, the range of competencies required of the Department had become much broader. In addition, the increase in the financial resources required placed a substantial burden on Member States and the expansion could not continue indefinitely. The mandate of each peacekeeping mission should be defined clearly at its inception, as should the exit strategies, to the extent possible. Current peacekeeping operations entailed diverse missions above and beyond the maintenance of peace; elements such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, reconstruction and social stability were equally important. Approaches to those matters therefore needed to be integrated into all peacekeeping operations from the initial planning stage. To facilitate integrated planning, a specific mechanism was needed to ensure the deployment of an appropriate mixture of political, military, development and humanitarian measures. His delegation therefore steadfastly supported the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.

39. If the United Nations was to respond to crises in time to prevent them from escalating out of control, the Department's rapid deployment capacity needed to be strengthened. The establishment of a standing civilian police capacity and of a strategic reserve had been recommended. Cooperation with regional groups such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the African Union should be considered as a way of setting up such a reserve. Increased cooperation between peacekeeping operations and regional groups had been stressed and avenues for cooperation between the United Nations, regional groups and donor countries should be explored. Indeed, cooperation should extend to all stakeholders, including major financial contributors, in the form of regular consultation.

40. The increased role of African countries in peacekeeping operations was welcome and the United Nations should continue its efforts to help to strengthen their peacekeeping capacities. Moreover, when recruiting personnel for the Department, it was important to emphasize balanced geographical distribution; special consideration should be given not only to applicants from troop-contributing countries, but also to those from countries contributing financial resources.

41. His delegation strongly supported the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy towards misconduct. It agreed that the investigative capacity within the United Nations should be strengthened and the responsibility of commanding officers for the misdeeds of the peacekeeping personnel under their authority should be increased. Unified guidelines applicable to all United Nations peacekeeping personnel should be developed and implemented. His country was strongly committed to peacekeeping and had lived up to that undertaking by its substantial financial contribution and its participation in peacekeeping operations around the world.

42. **Mr. Celarié Colato** (El Salvador) said that the Military and Civilian Police Advisers Community had been observing the work of several peacekeeping missions, and the next annual report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations should include a section on the specific recommendations arising from its reports.

43. It was vitally important to provide greater support to the United Nations departments responsible for standardizing peacekeeping training. Even though training was a national responsibility, all countries needed to follow similar guidelines.

44. El Salvador was a successful example of a peacekeeping operation that had culminated in the signing of a peace agreement. It now offered to transfer the experience accumulated during the negotiations and the consolidation of peace. The lessons learned provided guidelines that could be applied in conflict situations with similar characteristics. His Government was eager to give back to the international community the political support it had received and also the experience gained in the process of building and consolidating peace, by playing an active role in peacekeeping operations through its civilian police and armed forces and well-qualified Salvadoran officials.

45. **Mr. Ayafor** (Cameroon) said that the challenge for Member States was to continue to make peacekeeping operations more effective even as they became more complex and numerous, by taking a more integrated approach and devoting sufficient financial and human resources to them.

46. Peacekeeping operations were perhaps the most visible aspect of United Nations action in the maintenance of international peace and security, and care should be taken not to have those showcase operations s[illegible]lied by dishonourable conduct on the part of peacekeeping personnel. Member States whose nationals were guilty of the kind of deplorable sexual abuse that had occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should act to avoid any repetition within their contingents. Adequate training of peacekeeping personnel was the key to both the avoidance of misconduct and the achievement of effectiveness, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should continue to include the teaching of ethics and discipline in its training curriculum The Secretary-General's zero tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse was commendable, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should, with the Department of Public Information, explain the Organization's policy to the local populations.

47. The establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission had been one of the major proposals of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. Africa, especially, placed great hope in such a new body, which would help to ensure the rapid reconstruction of the States emerging from crises and allow coordination of the transition between the peacekeeping and reconstruction phases. The Peacebuilding Commission, however, would be able to work well only if a climate of peace had been sufficiently established in the troubled area before the full withdrawal of peacekeeping troops. The inclusion of troop-contributing countries and members of the Security Council in the Commission would make it possible to have a clear, practical picture of the security situation in the field.

48. The 2005 High-level Plenary Meeting Outcome had rightly emphasized the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. African countries were becoming increasingly involved in peacekeeping through the African Union. Despite its limited means, which curtailed the action it could take, the successful intervention of the African Union in Burundi had been a source of satisfaction, while its military deployments in the Sudan, while encouraging, showed that it could do better and that the African peacekeeping capacities needed to be reinforced. Central Africa looked forward to receiving United Nations cooperation in peacekeeping, as was already the case in other African regions.

49. Successful operations always took into account the realities on the ground. The Security Council decision to increase the troop strength of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) should make it possible for the presidential election to be held there as scheduled. The security of peacekeeping personnel was, however, a continuing source of concern, in the light of attacks committed against them in recent months.

50. Cameroon was taking an increasingly active part in peacekeeping operations. Cameroonian contingents of military observers and police were currently deployed in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, and his Government was, in addition, ready to help with the training of police personnel.

51. **Mr. Al-Otaibi** (Kuwait) said, that in addition to playing a vital role in defusing tensions around the world, peacekeeping operations were performing functions that were different from those that they had previously performed, such as disseminating humanitarian aid, monitoring elections and human rights, demining and disarmament, civilian policing, and helping to build State institutions. Such operations were basic tools for preserving international peace and security, and needed to be enhanced by a clearer definition of missions and leadership structures, greater coordination between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries, more United Nations involvement in preventive diplomacy, and improved training and planning.

52. There had been greater cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter, and it was hoped that the enhanced standby arrangements of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would improve rapid deployment capabilities. His delegation expressed its support for the recommendations of the adviser to the Secretary-General, His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, regarding sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel, and the measures taken to punish perpetrators of such acts, which harmed the reputation of the United Nations.

53. Kuwait had signed a Headquarters Agreement supporting the humanitarian and political activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), and it hoped that elections would be conducted on schedule and result in an elected constitutional Government as envisioned by the Security Council in its resolution 1546 (2004). Kuwait would continue to provide all the support it could to help Iraq to get through the current difficult period in its history.

54. Although its contributions to the peacekeeping budget had quintupled over the past few years, Kuwait was committed to continuing to pay its share; it hoped that other nations would do so too, because the various missions needed adequate resources to carry out their mandates. He commended the courage and sacrifice of those who served in peacekeeping missions, whether in a civilian or a military capacity, and called for adequate security measures to protect them.

55. **Mr. Li** Junhua (China) observed that peacekeeping operations were both a major collective security mechanism and a creative endeavour on the part of the United Nations as a dynamic force for the maintenance of world peace. With over 68,000 peacekeeping personnel currently in over 100 countries, the United Nations peacekeeping operations had over the years weathered many challenges.

56. The increased demand for peace operations and their greater scope and scale, however, had created a need for change. Many of the reforms advocated in 2000 by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, in its report, known as the Brahimi Report, had already been implemented; and the recent favourable assessment in the 2005 World Summit Outcome should give further impetus to the reform process. Peace operations should combine continuity and innovation, in keeping with the principles of the Charter and Security Council mandates, and in the process it was important always to maintain impartiality and respect the views of the countries concerned. In the discussions of the needed reforms, his delegation hoped that the views of the developing countries would be fully taken into account.

57. The available resources must be used effectively, given the increasing demand for peacekeeping, especially for the maintenance of regional peace and security. All Member States should therefore increase their contribution to the effort, politically, financially and in terms of human resources, and the full potential of existing mechanisms must be tapped through better management and integration.

58. His delegation favoured more rapid deployment of peace operations and supported the early implementation of the proposals regarding the establishment of a military strategic reserve force and a standing civilian police capacity. In consultation with Member States, the Secretariat should make practical proposals for those arrangements.

59. The United Nations should, furthermore, mobilize regional organizations in support of peacekeeping. The African Union was to be commended for its efforts to mediate and resolve conflicts on that continent, and the Security Council should work closely with it, supplying financial, logistical and technical support to enhance its peacekeeping and peacebuilding capabilities.

60. In recent years, China had expanded its involvement in peacekeeping, having contributed over 3,000 military, police and civilian personnel to a total of 14 operations. Currently, it had 1,500 peacekeepers in 11 mission areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Haiti, and it was a part of the United Nations Standby Arrangement System.

61. **Mr. Kryzhanivsky** (Ukraine) said that the safety and security of United Nations field personnel was of particular concern to his Government, which endorsed the concept of joint mission analysis cells in each mission to improve information gathering and the analysis of threats to peacekeeping personnel.

62. Acts of misconduct, in addition to harming the local population, undermined the credibility of the United Nations. His delegation supported the United Nations policy of zero tolerance with regard to sexual misconduct by peacekeeping personnel and welcomed the measures being taken by the Secretary-General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to address the issue.

63. Rapid deployment was essential to the success of a peacekeeping operation. His delegation urged the Secretariat to continue to work with Member States to make mechanisms such as the strategic deployment stocks and the United Nations Standby Arrangements System fully effective, in the light of lessons learned from recent mission start-ups. Ukraine supported the proposed creation of a standing civilian police capacity

and looked forward to contributing to it. One of the major obstacles to the rapid deployment of troops in the field had always been the need to secure financial resources, and it was important to find ways to ensure that troop-contributing countries received timely reimbursement for troops and contingent-owned equipment.

64. The partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in the area of peacekeeping should be strengthened through the provision of regional peacekeeping capacities. Assistance should be given to the regional organizations, particularly the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to expand their capacities.

65. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should continue to make it a high priority to work closely with troop-contributing countries. Interaction that involved the Security Council as well was indispensable to the effective conduct of peacekeeping operations at every stage.

66. Considerable progress had been made in reforming peacekeeping operations since the Brahimi report and the Headquarters capacity to plan, support and conduct such operations had been strengthened.

67. Ukraine, which had always been a supporter of United Nations peacekeeping, had been contributing troops and civilian police and providing strategic airlift capacities, helicopters and other equipment to peace operations, and would continue to do so.

68. **Ms. Pęksa-Krawiec** (Poland) said that the implementation of the recommendations in the Brahimi report had enabled the Organization to adopt a more complex, mature and effective approach, based on modern principles, to the reform of peacekeeping mechanisms, which had become increasingly complex and organizationally and financially more demanding. The changing international climate, however, brought new challenges and threats to the security of both States and individuals and the international community had to be prepared to deal with them. The 2005 World Summit had agreed on a new vision of world relations and even specific directions on how the Organization could adjust to the new situation.

69. One of the proposals made by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for the implementation of the Summit Outcome proposals with regard to peacekeeping — the elaboration of a peacekeeping doctrine — had particularly caught his delegation's attention. There was an urgent need to draw up a basic document, which would provide definitions, describe the environment in which peace operations were conducted, give systematic guidelines for the planning, deployment and conduct of operations, establish rules of engagement with regional organizations and other international institutions, and set clear standards of cooperation with Member States. In cooperation with other States, Poland was ready to support all the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in that regard.

70. As a member of many regional and subregional organizations involved in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, Poland saw a very practical need for strengthening their cooperation with the United Nations through agreements establishing a framework for cooperation, and the other measures set out in Security Council resolution 1631 (2005), and also through the sharing of experience in the operational and doctrinal fields.

71. What seemed to be most urgent, however, was the issue of practical cooperation in the planning of forces and the conduct of operations. Member States as well as the United Nations were overstretched, and were less and less able to provide troops when the need arose. Thus, in cooperation with other organizations, a new approach to the planning of forces needed to be developed and the concept of a strategic reserve force had to be made operational.

72. The Peacebuilding Commission would offer another opportunity for cooperation between regional organizations, United Nations agencies and the Secretariat. His delegation was confident that its establishment would further the development of multifunctional and multifaceted peacekeeping missions, especially in Africa, where solid foundations had to be laid for sustainable reconstruction and development.

73. Regrettably, the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by members of peacekeeping missions still persisted, and the Secretariat and Member States must apply the zero tolerance policy with greater determination by enforcing the rules of conduct and by ensuring that instances of misconduct were punished. That message must reach every level of the peacekeeping structure. His delegation supported the

proposal of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that national investigation officers should be appointed to bring offenders to justice. Indeed, no misconduct of any sort by peacekeepers, no violation of discipline, could be tolerated. Peacekeepers, both military and civilian, were sent into the field to help people and countries in need, and the trust and hope of those peoples in the United Nations must not be undermined.

74. **Mr. Spatafora** (Italy) said that the capacity of the United Nations to conduct peacekeeping operations had improved considerably since the adoption of the Brahimi report. His delegation was committed to providing the United Nations with the necessary tools to confront the very complex nature of peacekeeping operations and the new challenges the Organization faced in that regard. He commended the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to address the multidimensional aspects of modern peacekeeping missions, such as the rule of law, the protection of children in armed conflict and gender issues in activities ranging from conflict prevention to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. His delegation was confident that the proposed Peacebuilding Commission, which should be made operational by the end of the year, would provide an institutional framework within which it would be possible to develop more consistent policies to be implemented on the ground. In recent years, his country had made unprecedented increases in its contributions and commitments to multilateral organizations whose purpose was to maintain international peace and security.

75. At the 2005 World Summit, his delegation had acknowledged the important contribution to peace and security made by regional organizations under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The time had come to develop more structured, focused, efficient and effective ways and means for such cooperation, and his country would act consistently to achieve that goal. It would work with its European partners under the European Union/United Nations Joint Declaration on Crisis Management, signed in September 2003, to implement the Declaration and advance mutual understanding. It had also joined other Group of Eight partners in the Global Peace Operations Initiative, the aim of which was to train 75,000 peacekeepers by the year 2010. Based on the experience of its military police forces, the Carabinieri, Italy had established a Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Vicenza to provide training and skills for peace support operations. His country looked forward to continuing and, if possible, strengthening cooperation between the Centre and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

76. The Brindisi airbase, which Italy had donated to the United Nations in 1994, provided the Department with an operational logistics base that had proved essential in meeting the complex requirements of peacekeeping operations. The base also provided support in the areas of communication and training. His country was also prepared to finalize an agreement with the World Food Programme to expand the Logistics Base to the former NATO military base in San Vito de Normanni. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as an active participant in the negotiations, should carefully consider locating the duty station of the standing police capacity at the logistics base.

77. The sexual exploitation and abuse scandal had seriously damaged the image of United Nations peacekeeping forces. Many aspects of the problem had legal consequences which must be approached with the proper caution, through an active dialogue with troop-contributing countries that addressed the different legal systems involved. The Secretariat should also devote special attention to preventive action, in particular, to ensure that peacekeeping troops met the required standards and took specialized training courses aimed at raising awareness of the problem.

78. **Mr. Mahajan** (India) said that the fact that conflicts kept erupting all over the world was a sad commentary on the state of the global community. It was important to persevere in efforts to prevent conflicts in the hope — however utopian it might sound — that peace would one day prevail worldwide and that there would no longer be any need for peacekeeping operations.

79. Although the surge in peacekeeping operations had brought new challenges and demands, old problems persisted. The main difficulty was not a lack of resources or of personnel, but the fact that the Security Council was unrepresentative, lacked the political will to take adequate action, and failed adequately to involve troop contributors — the key players on the ground — in discussions that could lead to optimal decisions. He drew attention to the recent developments involving the United Nations Mission in

Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) in that regard. Moreover, although some non-permanent members of the Security Council had attempted to utilize existing consultation mechanisms, the overall situation was less than desirable.

80. His country's bitter experience with respect to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) had prompted it to be a strong advocate for enhanced interaction between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries. Articles 43 and 44 of the Charter of the United Nations called for participation by Members providing armed forces in decision-making regarding the employment of their contingents. That provision was observed mostly in the breach. If troop-contributing countries were not given a voice in the evolution of Security Council mandates, they might have little option in the future but to pull out of operations in which their troops were forced to take on tasks that either could not or should not be carried out.

81. The fact that over 80 per cent of the troops currently deployed in peacekeeping operations were from members of the Non-Aligned Movement was a distressing reflection on the willingness of members of the Security Council to share the burden of maintaining international peace and security, particularly given the primary responsibility of the Council in that regard under Article 24 of the Charter.

82. His delegation was dismayed that various constraints, especially fiscal considerations, were circumscribing United Nations peacekeeping activities, as evidenced by the recent tendency to favour regional solutions in peacekeeping, particularly in Africa. Although the United Nations could not be everywhere, the Council must guard against creating the perception that it was opting for regional solutions in order to avoid exercising its global responsibility for peace and security. The United Nations was the only universal organization with the legitimacy, moral authority, experience and expertise required to discharge that responsibility.

83. His country had already endorsed the United Nations policy of zero tolerance regarding sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel and had taken a more forceful position against such actions in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in April 2005 than had many other delegations. His country wished to assure the Secretary-General that it would continue to work vigorously towards the full implementation of his recommendations on the issue.

84. On the question of enhancing the capabilities of the United Nations to deploy forces rapidly and effectively his delegation had noted with interest that a standing civilian police capacity would be established on a pilot basis in 2006 in order to facilitate the start-up of civilian components of peacekeeping operations. It also looked forward to resuming discussions on the strategic reserve concept.

85. His delegation fully shared the concerns that had been voiced concerning the safety and security of peacekeepers and associated United Nations personnel. It believed that the Security Council was not shouldering its responsibilities in that regard in the case of UNMEE. His delegation had also taken note of the fact that a comprehensive policy on Joint Operations Centres and Joint Mission Analysis Cells was being developed, building on best practices in the field, and it urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to make a serious effort to ensure that troops in the field received the tactical information they required in real time. Sufficient information of that kind had been sorely lacking thus far.

86. His country had actively participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since their inception in the 1950s and it believed it had earned the right to speak frankly about the real needs of peacekeeping. His delegation would provide its full support as the Committee continued to tackle the challenges of peacekeeping in 2006.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 25 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Anguiano Rodríguez (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Mexico)
later: Mr. Aliyev (Chairman) ..... (Azerbaijan)

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In the absence of the Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan), Ms. Anguiano Rodriguez (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 32: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects *(continued)*

1. **Mr. Navoti** (Fiji) said that the five areas of priority identified by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations — people, doctrine, partnership, organization, and resources — were required steps in order to make United Nations peacekeeping more effective.

2. His delegation supported the notion that the Department must preserve the image and integrity of the Organization; misconduct and perceptions of impropriety were unacceptable and detrimental to relations between national contingents and the host Governments and people. He strongly condemned all acts of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. It was important to implement the decisions taken earlier in 2005 by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Each troop-contributing country should assure the Secretary-General of its respect for local laws and the exercise of its jurisdiction when allegations against individual members of its contingent were conclusively established, and measures to eliminate abuse and exploitation should be made part of the performance goals of managers and commanders. Furthermore, United Nations personnel must be held financially accountable for harm caused to victims of such exploitation and abuse.

3. He commended the level of support which the Department had provided to a growing number of field activities and special political missions and offices around the world. Referring to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, he paid tribute to the unwavering commitment of the United Nations to ensure the restoration of the country from the devastation of war so that its people could take their rightful place as free citizens of a sovereign State. His country's current contribution to peacekeeping in Baghdad and to the proposed extension of operations elsewhere was a reaffirmation of its recognition and support for the primary responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security as set forth in the Charter.

4. The current rules governing the legal status of United Nations civilian police personnel should be adapted to give them immunities equivalent to those of armed military personnel, since their tasks included the implementation of law and order functions that might require them to use enforcement measures in accordance with their mandates and rules of engagement. The extension of such protection warranted further consideration.

5. The complexity of peacekeeping, in terms of the number of missions mounted and the multi-tasking skills involved, made it essential to address the root causes of conflict in a coherent and coordinated manner. The motives of the Organization as world peacekeepers must be focused on a sincere desire to establish long-lasting peace, security and development.

6. **Mr. Selim** (Egypt) said that the success of peacekeeping operations depended on the balanced participation by, and effective coordination among, the different elements of the international community, including the relevant United Nations organs, troop-contributing countries, regional and subregional organizations, and international donors. In order to be able to deploy forces promptly and to save thousands of lives, the Security Council needed to be able to adopt resolutions and confer mandates swiftly, without interference by interested parties.

7. His delegation looked forward to studying the Under-Secretary-General's ideas for reform during the forthcoming meetings of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. It especially welcomed the Secretary-General's personal peacemaking efforts in Africa, which highlighted the need for more coordination between the United Nations and regional forces there. His delegation looked forward to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission called for in the Outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting. The marshalling of resources for post-conflict reconstruction would shorten the transition between peacekeeping and peacebuilding; that would help to prevent States from sliding back into conflict. As a major contributor to peacekeeping operations in Africa, Egypt had in the past year become a member of the United Nations Standby Arrangements System, had joined the Standby High-Readiness Brigade as an observer, and had contributed to the policing

component of peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti.

8. United Nations peacebuilding efforts in Africa should continue to focus on building Africa's own peacekeeping capacities. A good example was the technical cooperation between the United Nations and the African Mission in Sudan, which did not impinge on African ownership of the field presence in Darfur. In that regard, his delegation applauded the pledges to enhance African peacekeeping capacities that had emerged from the High-level Plenary Meeting in September, the European Union, and the G8 Africa Action Plan approved at the Kananaskis summit in 2002. Egypt itself was currently cooperating with the African Union Commission to supply training and technical support for the creation of a North Africa Brigade envisioned as one of five African regional rapid deployment brigades. It was also working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to provide advanced training and capacity-building in the field of peacekeeping, and was eager to see wider African participation in both the military and the policing components of peacekeeping operations.

9. His delegation shared the concern expressed by many others regarding the sexual abuse committed by United Nations peacekeeping personnel and called for adequate measures to be taken to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. It also welcomed the report of the Adviser to the Secretary-General, His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, in that regard. At the same time, his delegation expressed its appreciation to those members of peacekeeping missions who carried out their duties in a way that reflected properly on the image of the United Nations and its peacekeeping operations.

10. **Mr. Azeez** (Sri Lanka) said that his country had recently made its first major contribution to United Nations peacekeeping efforts by deploying a battalion of 750 troops to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). He thanked the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for its cooperation in that endeavour. He was also pleased to inform the Committee that Sri Lanka had established a Peace Support Training Institute to prepare military personnel for peacekeeping missions.

11. Noting the recent successes of peacekeeping activities aimed at assisting the transition from conflict to peace in several mission areas, he acknowledged that peacekeeping operations had become more complex. In facing the challenge of allocating adequate human and financial resources to watch the increasing demand, the Organization required further cooperation from Member States, and the possibility of the internal reallocation of resources should be explored.

12. As a troop-contributing country, Sri Lanka was concerned for the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel in the field, and it welcomed the action taken by the Secretariat to strengthen inter-departmental cooperation. There might be challenges beyond the reach of the United Nations, and in such cases efforts must be made to establish dialogue among all the parties concerned.

13. He stressed the importance of partnerships and other arrangements for coping with crises and the need for closer coordination among all United Nations agencies, as well as civil society and troop-contributing countries. Incidents of misconduct by peacekeepers were a matter of concern and urgent action should be taken. All relevant aspects must be considered and viable solutions must be found to address and prevent the recurrence of such problems.

14. **Mr. Win** (Myanmar) said that peacekeeping operations must subscribe to the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and respect the principles of the sovereign equality, political independence and territorial integrity of all States and non-intervention in matters that were essentially within their domestic jurisdiction.

15. Noting that peacekeeping operations had increased and become more complex and multi-dimensional, he said that the social, economic, and judicial aspects of such operations had to be addressed from the very beginning, with the involvement of other United Nations agencies, in order to facilitate effective peacebuilding and prevent the recurrence of armed conflict in the long term. It was important that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be efficiently structured and adequately staffed and that its mission leaders should be properly trained. He welcomed the provision of standardized training modules levels II and III for all Member States, as well as the establishment of a senior leadership induction programme. A fresh approach to the recruitment, training and retention of professional field personnel and leaders was indeed necessary.

16. His delegation welcomed the zero tolerance policy towards peacekeepers who had been guilty of sexual abuse and misconduct in the field. The code of conduct must be enforced and violations punished in order to protect the reputation and standing of the United Nations, the peacekeeping missions and the peacekeeping personnel.

17. Measures must be taken to enhance the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel in the field. There must be more coordination between the Department of Safety and Security and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in order to provide integrated security assessments, operational advice and support to crisis management at all levels, including the missions in the field, and there must be better coordination in the sharing of information and intelligence between the centre and the missions.

18. Peacekeeping was a noble cause, and he paid tribute to the blue helmets who had sacrificed their lives or limbs to safeguard international peace and security.

19. **Ms. Qwabe** (South Africa) said that, at a time when the United Nations was being called upon to expand and upgrade its role in a number of conflicts in Africa and other parts of the world, Member States had a responsibility to ensure that the necessary support and resources were provided to enable the Organization to meet its challenges effectively and efficiently. The time had come for all parties to forge partnerships to address logistical deficiencies.

20. Referring to the role of regional organizations in the maintenance of peace and security, she welcomed the decision taken at the 2005 World Summit in that regard. It would greatly assist the African Union as it embarked on its peace and security action plan; in many situations regional organizations were well placed to intervene sooner than United Nations processes would allow. She welcomed the decision to enhance peacekeeping capacity in Africa through a 10-year plan for capacity-building with the African Union. Logistics remained the most critical weakness in peacekeeping, and for that reason she welcomed the establishment of the African Peace Facility by the European Union. The role of regional structures, however, should be not construed as absolving the United Nations of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

21. She also welcomed the creation of a standing civilian police capacity; that would help to overcome some of the constraints in the deployment of civilian police.

22. The concept of strategic reserve entailed a number of elements that required further work, but her delegation believed that it had the potential to meet the demands posed by difficult conflict situations. The African Union had also recognized the potential value of reserves by agreeing to establish a Standby Force to enable the African contingent to intervene rapidly to avert conflicts. States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) had pledged forces in excess of 6,000 soldiers to a standby brigade and had begun joint exercises in peace support operations.

23. It had been widely documented that the main drivers for conflict in Africa were resource-based and therefore inherently economic by nature. Military-focused approaches often ignored the developmental and economic factors that were both the source and resolution of conflicts. Her delegation therefore encouraged an integrated approach that incorporated peacebuilding during the start-up of a peacekeeping mission. Post-conflict practitioners and resources should be deployed alongside peacekeepers to guarantee a smooth transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

24. She joined previous speakers in condemning the abusive acts committed against women and children, and commended the high level of professionalism, courage and dedication displayed by the overwhelming majority of peacekeepers, some of whom had lost their lives in the service of peace.

25. **Mr. Okio** (Congo) drew attention to the financial and material limitations placed on the peacekeeping capacity of the United Nations, and appealed to Member States to support the Organization in meeting its challenges. He also stressed the need for sustained cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, including non-governmental organizations.

26. With specific reference to Africa, he said that, although considerable progress had been achieved and the number of conflict situations in the region had been reduced, the international community needed to pay greater attention to countries that were economically fragile, in their daily struggle against poverty and underdevelopment. He paid tribute to the African

Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for settling conflicts affecting countries of those subregions through peace negotiations, and for providing good offices for the conclusion of peace agreements and the deployment of peacekeeping forces, as had occurred in the case of the Darfur crisis. Regional bodies could certainly play a more active role in international peacekeeping and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the fight against terrorism and the control of small arms and light weapons. The Security Council had urged States and relevant international organizations to participate in capacity-building in the area of conflict prevention, crisis management and stabilization and welcomed the establishment of the European Union African Peace Facility. His delegation strongly supported all efforts made to enhance peacekeeping, capacity-building, cooperation between the United Nations and regional bodies, and strategic partnerships.

27. He underscored the need for a global strategy to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse. The international community should do its utmost to ensure that those who committed such acts did not enjoy impunity and particular attention should be paid to the training of all categories of peacekeeping personnel. His delegation fully endorsed the recommendations relating to the living conditions and working conditions of peacekeepers, the use of independent investigators to pursue allegations of abuse, gender issues, and compensation to the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. His delegation also supported the recommendation in the Outcome of the 2005 World Summit, whereby regional organizations that had a capacity for the prevention of armed conflict or peacekeeping were invited to consider the option of placing such capacity in the framework of the United Nations Standby Arrangements System. In that vein, interaction between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the proposed Peacebuilding Commission would benefit from clearly defined mandates and complementarity.

28. **Mr. Kapoma** (Zambia) commended the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on its effectiveness in conducting the current 18 peacekeeping operations, and praised the African Union for taking the lead, through its Peace and Security Council, in addressing peacekeeping challenges on the African continent, as in Darfur. The United Nations and strategic partners should provide support to ensure the sustainability of such operations, particularly in the areas of doctrine, training standards, logistical support, planning, management and funding. Since Africa was the continent most affected by conflicts, priority should be given to the development of the African Standby Force, which would not only meet African Union peacekeeping needs, but also serve as a United Nations strategic reserve. His delegation supported the adoption of preventive strategies to guard against sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel, and favoured the establishment of conduct and discipline units.

29. **Mr. Dolgov** (Russian Federation) said that, in view of the increasing number and complexity of United Nations peacekeeping operations, the development of a peacekeeping doctrine integrating the theory and practice of the Organization was long overdue and required collective efforts by the Member States. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations was the most appropriate body for such work and for defining the peacekeeping terminology. The settlement of individual conflicts required tools suited to each particular case, be it a United Nations peacekeeping operation, or a coalition or regional operation, and there must be sufficient flexibility to provide a range of responses to complex crises. There was a need to strengthen the legal framework of peacekeeping in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the decisions of the Security Council and the 2005 World Summit Outcome in order to provide a real alternative to unilateral approaches to the settlement of crisis situations. It was essential to abide by international peacekeeping principles at all stages of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding and, above all, to recognize the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The connection between post-conflict social and economic recovery and peacemaking justified the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission, within the time frame envisaged in the World Summit Outcome, to serve as a focal point for peacebuilding activities and to assist the Security Council and other United Nations bodies in ensuring the early rehabilitation of countries emerging from crisis and preventing a resurgence of violence.

30. As a follow-up to the World Summit, regional organizations which had a potential to prevent armed conflict or engage in peacekeeping should be

encouraged to contribute to the United Nations Stand-by Arrangements System. The United Nations and the Security Council should pay close attention to improved coordination and cooperation with those organizations, while maintaining the prerogatives of the Organization. Recourse to military expertise during the discussion of a draft resolution in the Security Council and in the planning and execution of a peacekeeping operation could be ensured through the Military Staff Committee. An operational civilian police component in the Secretariat would provide early and effective coordination and expertise to promote the rule of law as a basis for comprehensive conflict resolution. Cooperation among the Security Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat should take place in accordance with Security Council resolution 1353 (2001) through the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, and, in particular, the mechanism referred to in the note by the President of the Security Council dated 14 January 2002 (S/2002/56).

31. It was inadmissible that parties to a conflict should unlawfully hold United Nations peacekeeping personnel hostage, as had occurred in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Russian Federation intended to increase its direct contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations, to promote the peacekeeping capacity of other countries, inter alia through training, and to provide peacekeeping assistance to African countries.

32. **Mr. Kidane** (Ethiopia), noting the Department's cooperation with the African Union through the United Nations assistance cell in Addis Ababa, said that additional resources were required in order to enhance the peacekeeping capacities of the African Union. The United Nations and other partners should provide support in the areas of training, logistics and equipment in order to enable the African Union and subregional organizations to deal with conflicts. His country, along with other countries, had played an important role in the establishment of the East African Standby Brigade.

33. His delegation supported the five priority areas identified by the Under-Secretary-General and attached great importance to the need for coherent system-wide coordination in the planning, conduct and support of integrated missions. It looked forward to the completion of the inter-agency review and the institutionalization of the Integrated Mission Planning Process, both at Headquarters and in the field. His delegation fully supported the Department's zero tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse.

34. **Mr. Lau Yeng Peng** (Malaysia) said that the growing complexity and increasingly multidimensional nature of some current conflicts presented the Organization with a continuous challenge, and it would be unable to continue to fulfil its central role in maintaining international peace and security without the commitment and support of all United Nations agencies, Member States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and donor countries. Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the mechanism established by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to create synergy between various United Nations bodies, intergovernmental entities and non-governmental organizations.

35. The Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit should be strengthened. In view of the level of resources available and the growing demand for peacekeeping missions, the Department should be restructured and Member States, particularly countries with well-equipped and well-trained military personnel, should increase their voluntary contributions and actively participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations by providing troops, staff officers or military observers.

36. The United Nations should further help to enhance the peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding capacities of regional organizations or arrangements, especially by providing advisory, logistic and financial support. Regional initiatives, however, could not absolve the United Nations of its responsibility to promote peace; moreover, they should be governed by the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

37. Malaysia was currently actively involved in many United Nations peacekeeping missions, providing military observers, staff officers, civilian police personnel and, when required, troops. The security and safety of all peacekeeping personnel should be a collective concern of the international community and he condemned the acts of violence against them. Cooperation between the Department of Safety and Security and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be further strengthened and the Joint Mission Analysis Cell should be reinforced.

38. **Mr. Al-Otmi** (Yemen) said that peacekeeping operations played a vital role in the restoration of peace and security in post-conflict situations and in helping States to achieve prosperity and development. His delegation applauded both the Secretary-General's report on shortcomings in peacekeeping operations and the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809), known as the Brahimi report, which had become a core peacekeeping document. It affirmed the need for wider participation in peacekeeping operations in order to give them a truly global character.

39. He strongly condemned the killing and abduction of United Nations personnel and conveyed his condolences to the victims' families. Tighter security was needed at United Nations missions in order to safeguard those who dedicated their lives to the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world. Yemen had sent military observers and police officers to Liberia, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, and the Sudan, and expected to increase its participation in the future. The assistance provided by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the training of peacekeeping units in Yemen was much appreciated, even though that had somewhat delayed the participation of those units in peacekeeping operations. His delegation supported the decision by the High-level Plenary Meeting to create a Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the establishment of a genuine triangular partnership among the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing States.

40. Sexual abuse by United Nations personnel was a stain on the Organization's reputation, and his delegation supported the recommendations of the Adviser to the Secretary-General, His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, on that issue. He was certain that the peace-loving peoples of the world were equal to the challenges that lay ahead.

41. **Mr. Ohlson** (United States of America) associated his delegation with those which had called for a greater commitment to responsible management in peacekeeping, especially in relation to conduct and discipline. Sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers was a scourge that had to be eliminated and every Member State had a duty to investigate and prosecute any of its citizens involved in such crimes.

42. The time had come for a full and comprehensive review of the conduct of United Nations peacekeeping operations. In the interests of addressing the underlying conflicts and maximizing the effective use of limited resources, there must be a willingness to examine whether a peacekeeping mission was prolonging a stalemate by failing to exert sufficient pressure on the parties to resolve their differences through political or diplomatic means. Where that was the case, it was important to find ways to invigorate the peace process or to begin to scale back, restructure, or close down the operation concerned. A clear exit strategy had to be in place from the start of a peacekeeping operation. As soon as peacekeepers had brought the active phase of a conflict under control, efforts should be made to distinguish between the tasks to be undertaken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and those to be handled by other actors, including the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the specialized agencies, regional and subregional organizations and bilateral partners. Some missions would and should have limited goals and be correspondingly limited as to size and resources. Peacekeeping operations should never be a substitute for a political process aimed at complete conflict resolution leading to long-term and sustainable peace, development and security. Work had been carried out to identify common elements of successful peacekeeping missions for possible replication, and criteria could also be developed to identify which missions were ripe for innovative action in order to move ahead towards a final peace.

43. **Mr. Ruiz Rosas** (Peru) said that the nature and structure of peacekeeping operations had changed in recent years in response to the multidimensional character of intra-State conflicts. The military capacity and the civilian police component of missions had been enhanced and the United Nations agencies had increasingly focused on political and social issues. That process of adaptation, however, should not keep the international community from addressing the common denominators of civil intra-State conflicts, namely poverty, exclusion and marginalization. The future Peacebuilding Commission should propose multilateral conflict-prevention strategies and policies that would promote development for all.

44. Since rapid deployment was a key factor in peacekeeping operations, Member States should contribute troops to the Organization's strategic

reserves voluntarily, unconditionally and under a standing mandate. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations should provide clear guidelines in that regard.

45. The proposed measures concerning the improvement of staff training, the development of a pragmatic doctrine for peacekeeping operations and the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations deserved serious consideration. Sexual abuse and exploitation by United Nations peacekeepers were shameful and intolerable and should be punished.

46. Peru had increased its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, for instance in Haiti. It was ready to contribute to training activities organized by the Department and would make its infrastructure and experience available.

47. **Mr. Amolo** (Kenya) said that the achievement of peace and stability was one of his country's key national objectives so that more energy could be devoted to development rather than to conflict resolution. It was currently engaged in eight United Nations peacekeeping operations.

48. Most peacekeeping operations were in Africa. Those undertaken in collaboration with the African Union in Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia had reduced conflict and enabled post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts to commence, and elections had been held successfully in those countries during the past year. He particularly commended the troop-contributing countries for offering the men and women who promoted peace, and whose courage was the inspirational face of the United Nations.

49. Kenya embraced the comprehensive African position established during the open-ended consultations and urged flexibility in order that there should be regional and subregional participation in the Peacebuilding Commission. He commended the African Union, in particular its Peace and Security Council, for having identified the need for a comprehensive collective security architecture for Africa. He welcomed the plans to establish an African standby force, and hoped that the international community would support the African Union in its efforts to realize its goals. He commended the Secretary-General's report on the enhancement of African peacekeeping capacity. With support from the international community, the African Union could play a leading and meaningful role in containing and deterring armed conflict in Africa. African troops were available for deployment, for example in Darfur, but more financial, technical and, especially, logistical resources were now required. It was important to explore the possibilities of turning over equipment from United Nations missions that were closing down. The Secretary-General's strategic reserve initiative would help to make adequate reserve capability available.

50. Kenya was actively participating in efforts to rid the world of mines, and in 2004 had hosted the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty. Demining was vital to the overall success of peacekeeping operations, and Kenyan troops were currently participating in demining activities as part of various United Nations peacekeeping missions. Adequate planning was required when military demining operations were combined with demining for humanitarian purposes, particularly when they were performed by non-military organizations. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should engage more closely with troop-contributing countries on that issue.

51. His delegation shared the Secretary-General's deep concern about the incidents of sexual abuse and exploitation and supported his zero tolerance policy. His Government was committed to ensuring that Kenyan peacekeepers were adequately trained to maintain the highest standards of discipline.

52. *Mr. Aliyev, Azerbaijan, took the Chair.*

53. **Mr. Bailly** (Côte d'Ivoire) welcomed the high level of priority accorded to personnel issues by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and noted that his Government had ratified the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. A peacekeeping mission was currently working in his country, mostly without incident in the area under Government control. He thanked the troop-contributing countries for the protection they had provided to those living in conflict areas. The Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance of sexual abuse was appropriate; the Department's commitment to improving staff training and selection would reduce cases of improper conduct by peacekeepers.

54. A critical situation had prevailed in his country since the failed coup d'état of 2002 and cooperation between the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations had led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005). That illustrated the importance of working in partnership.

55. Cooperation with the World Bank was also vital, as finance was an essential component of crisis resolution and long-term peace. It was a mistake to suspend economic cooperation with a country such as his which had made considerable efforts to protect its economy and honoured most of its external commitments.

56. Securing the borders of a country in conflict must be the highest of all priorities; borders were permeable when insufficient resources were available. He commended the recent resolution requiring neighbouring countries to prevent cross border movement of combatants and weapons into his country.

57. Peacekeeping operations must respect the principles of impartiality and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States and should never be used to interfere in a State's internal affairs.

58. **Mr. Kruljević** (Serbia and Montenegro) said that, five years after the issuance of the Brahimi report, there were still gaps in the reform process. He agreed with the Under-Secretary-General's view that that process had been overtaken by the scope and complexity of contemporary peacekeeping operations. The planning and execution of peacekeeping operations needed to be reviewed. A realistic and objective assessment of the experience gained from peacekeeping operations to date was essential, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations must open its eyes to the realities in the field.

59. In that connection, numerous reports on the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) had unfortunately enumerated only positive developments in the province of Kosovo and Metohija, and had minimized or failed to mention substantial problems; serious difficulties had all too often been overlooked by UNMIK. That was why developments had taken the course that they had in the province and why virtually none of the tasks UNMIK had been mandated to carry out had been accomplished adequately.

60. Sustainable peace could not be built without effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration or without the rule of law or respect for human rights. Unfortunately, the involvement of the United Nations in those areas had shown a mixed record. The proposed Peacebuilding Commission should galvanize action to define concepts and strategies while avoiding a uniform approach. Reliance on lessons learned from various missions would be important.

61. A number of conclusions could be drawn from the performance of UNMIK. One was that effective disarmament was critical for the overall achievement of stability: the failure of UNMIK in that regard was the principal reason for the volatile security situation and the widespread violence in Kosovo and Metohija. Another conclusion was that the establishment of the rule of law required international judges and prosecutors to administer justice, especially in the case of ethnically motivated crimes and organized crime; UNMIK had used mostly civilian police and an insufficient number of international judicial staff, and that had paved the way for the emergence of a culture of impunity. Recent developments indicated that UNMIK had unfortunately learned very little on that score. Since there was almost no reason to believe that the local judiciary would soon be able to perform the functions currently carried out by international personnel, the decision to begin withdrawing the international personnel was premature and should be reconsidered.

62. In peacekeeping missions in general the issue of discipline was important. He condemned the recent deplorable incidents of sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers and urged the Secretariat to spare no effort in dealing with misconduct firmly, in order to safeguard the credibility of the operation in question and the confidence of the local population. His country was extremely concerned about the alleged systemic corruption within UNMIK in relation to the publicly owned enterprises, referred to in the latest report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Once the investigations were complete, those responsible must be punished, and all cases of corruption should be brought to the attention of the Security Council.

Agenda item 26: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*continued*)

Draft resolution V on the question of Tokelau (A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. E and A/C.4/60/L.5)

63. **Ms. Takaku** (Papua New Guinea) drew attention to the amendments to draft resolution V sponsored by Papua New Guinea and Fiji (A/C.4/60/L.5). She read out the amendments, noting that, in paragraph 2, before the phrase "from that date", the phrase "with effect from 1 July 2004 and the assumption by each taupulega" should also be deleted.

64. **Mr. McIvor** (New Zealand), referring both to the draft resolution and to the amendments to it, said that his Government, as the administering Power, believed it was important to reflect the latest developments. The referendum would be held in Tokelau between 6 and 10 December 2005 and would require a full week to allow for voting in each of the three island villages on separate days; the results would be released at the end of the voting. He was pleased to announce that the United Nations had accepted the invitation by New Zealand and Tokelau to send a team to monitor the integrity of the process and to report the results to the General Assembly early in 2006. His Government hoped that Tokelau would move to free association status in the second quarter of 2006.

65. *The amendments contained in document A/C.4/60/L.5 to draft resolution V were adopted without a vote.*

66. *Draft resolution V, contained in document A/60/23, chap. XII, sect. E, as amended, was adopted without a vote.*

67. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia) speaking in explanation of her delegation's position, said that it had joined in the consensus because it regarded the process under way in the Territory of Tokelau as a model for others to follow. It congratulated the Government of Tokelau on its steadfast commitment to the advancement of its people, as they moved towards free association, one of the three political status options recognized by the General Assembly as providing a full measure of self-government. It also expressed appreciation to the Government of New Zealand for its support throughout the process.

68. The full participation of the Government of New Zealand in the work of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was an expression of support for the positive role that the United Nations could play in the decolonization of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and she hoped that the remaining administering Powers would resume their participation in the Special Committee's work in keeping with the wishes of the people of the Territories they administered and with the Charter of the United Nations.

Agenda item 29: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.6

69. **Mr. Abiodun** (Nigeria), speaking as Chairman of the Working Group of the Whole, introduced the draft resolution on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/C.4/60/L.6). A spirit of cooperation had prevailed throughout the three meetings on the draft resolution. Comments had also been made in the Working Group on the draft study on the possibility of creating an international entity to provide for coordination and the means of realistically optimizing the effectiveness of space-based services for use in disaster management, which had been prepared as agreed by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

70. The draft resolution before the Committee covered the work that COPUOS and its two subsidiary bodies would be doing during the coming year. Its text was very similar to that adopted on the subject the previous year, although a new ninth preambular paragraph had been added. Paragraphs 3 to 16 of the draft resolution related to the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee and that of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

71. He drew particular attention to paragraphs 19 to 25, dealing with regional cooperation and activities; paragraphs 36 and 37, referring to activities by the agencies of the United Nation system; paragraph 38, regarding international cooperation; paragraphs 39 and 47 to 53, on the work COPUOS would do at its forty-ninth session; paragraphs 54 to 58, on the composition of the Committee's Bureau for the next four years; paragraphs 40 to 43 on the projected activities of

COPUOS and the progress it had made in implementing the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III); paragraphs 44 to 46, on the activities and financial situation of the Office for Outer Space Affairs; and paragraph 60, regarding the granting of permanent observer status in COPUOS to the European Space Policy Institute.

72. The Working Group of the Whole had agreed on the text of the draft resolution by consensus, and he hoped that the Committee would adopt it without a vote.

73. *Draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.6 was adopted without a vote.*

74. **Mr. De la Batie** (France) speaking in explanation of his delegation's position, said that, like those of the other European Union countries, his delegation had joined the consensus on the important resolution that had just been adopted and endorsed the work programme it set out for COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies. His delegation wished, however, to express dissatisfaction with the way the draft resolution had been prepared, which had run counter to the principle of multilingualism and the parity of all the official languages. The establishment of a Working Group of the Whole was a good idea, but the draft resolution had been submitted in only one language and discussed only in that language. Despite repeated requests, his delegation had not received a French text until five days after the Working Group had concluded its work; that situation could not be justified by past practice or by a lack of time. His delegation might reconsider its participation in the Working Group of the Whole the following year unless draft resolutions were submitted in all the official languages for discussion.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/60/SR.17

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Summary record of the 17th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 26 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev ..... (Azerbaijan)

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Agenda item 27: Assistance in mine action

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05-57076 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Assistance in mine action

1. **Ms. Lute** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations), reviewing the developments in mine action, since the previous year's report of the Secretary-General (A/59/284 and Add.1), said that the mine action sector, having codified the best industry-wide practices in the International Mine Action Standards, was continuously improving the gathering and analysis of information through the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). As United Nations action had grown in scope, the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had taken a leading role in articulating the essential issues and coordinating the roles and responsibilities of each of the 14 agencies and departments that comprised the United Nations mine action team. A recently published document on the United Nations inter-agency policy entitled "Mine Action and Effective Coordination: the UN inter-agency policy" gave a picture of the Organization's work in the areas of coordination, resource mobilization, local capacity development and institutional support, information management, the training of personnel and quality management, in each of the five basic areas of mine action.

2. In the area of coordination, inter-agency assessment missions to Senegal and Uganda had led both countries to set up programmes to deal with the landmine problem coherently.

3. In the area of clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war, the United Nations had bolstered its support to Member States for technical surveying, mapping, marking, clearance, post-clearance documentation, community liaison and the handover of cleared land. In Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Ethiopia/Eritrea security zone, southern Lebanon and Sudan, mine action was an integral component of the comprehensive peace agreements and was part of the United Nations peace operations. In the case of Cyprus, cooperative mine action was actually contributing to peacebuilding between the two sides. Together with its implementing partners, the United Nations was now working in an environment where more mines came out of the ground than were planted each year.

4. As the lead agency in Colombia, the only nation in Latin America where mines were still being sown, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was putting the main emphasis on mine risk education. In Nepal where improvised explosive devices presented the main threat, it was working closely with the inter-agency framework for mine action planning and rapid response. In Sudan, the peacekeeping mission's mine risk education activities were helping the local and displaced populations to avoid accidents as they returned to their homes.

5. In the area of victim assistance, the aim had been to increase resources dedicated to the physical, socio-economic, educational and vocational training needs of survivors and their families. The portfolio of mine action projects for 2006, which would be published the following month, showed a significant increase in the number of victim assistance projects that addressed the entire cycle from emergency first aid to social reintegration. Most recently, the Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, with the support of the United Nations Office of Project Services, had — together with the national mine action authorities in northern and southern Sudan — put together a joint victim-assistance programme for those areas. That innovative approach had attracted significant funds from a new source, the Human Security Trust Fund. The United Nations mine action team also supported the development of an international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

6. In the area of stockpile destruction, the number of stockpiled anti-personnel landmines continued to decline, while in the area of outreach and advocacy a United Nations inter-agency communications strategy had been developed and was being implemented. The Mine Action Service had developed public service announcements that were broadcast by networks around the world and on the Electronic Mine Information Network (E-MINE), raising awareness of the humanitarian and development impact of mines and directing viewers to websites where they could contribute to efforts to address the problem. Moreover, high-level missions had been deployed to a number of countries to urge adherence to the treaties that formed the normative basis for mine action.

7. **Mr. Lake** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked what progress had been made in achieving the objectives of the United Nations

mine action strategy for 2001-2005, what lessons had been learned and what were considered to be the remaining challenges and priorities.

8. Secondly, he asked whether the gender guidelines, which were to have been field tested, had proved to need further development and when a progress report on them would be ready.

9. **Mr. Flanagan** (Mine Action Service, Department of Peacekeeping Operations) reviewed several notable achievements over the past five years under each of the six strategic goals of the United Nations mine action strategy.

10. Under goal 1 relating to information, the Mine Action Service had completely recast its website and the fact that 5,000 users visited it weekly indicated that it was an important repository of information. Also, an inter-agency communications strategy was now being implemented in many countries, to coordinate and improve outreach. The latest version of the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), developed in conjunction with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, would soon be operational in more than 40 countries. Two more inter-agency assessment missions were planned for 2005, to Ukraine and Colombia.

11. Under goal 2 relating to effective mine action in United Nations-managed programmes and planning processes, the United Nations Mine Action Service had developed a framework for mine action planning and rapid response the aim of which was to have personnel on the ground and operational within 14 days of a Security Council resolution authorizing a peace operation. It had proved successful in Iraq in 2003 and had been reviewed and evaluated in 2004. In addition to the mine action programmes established as integral components of peacekeeping missions, the Service was now the focal point for the protection cluster within the humanitarian response initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; that required much inter-agency cooperation.

12. Under goal 3 relating to effective planning, coordination and implementation of national and local mine action programmes, 15 impact-based surveys had been completed or were under way in various countries. As part of the preparations for the Nairobi Summit on a Mine Free World, the United Nations had helped to develop 20 national plans that gave priority to surveying, clearance, and mine risk education obligations under international treaties. Also, over 400 national staff from more than 20 mine-affected countries had received management training.

13. Under goal 4 regarding the highest attainable standard of implementation of mine action operations, the International Mine Action Standards were continuously reviewed for relevance by a Review Board comprising all members of the mine action sector — non-governmental organizations, government bodies and authorities, donors, commercial companies, and independent military and civilian specialists — and, as funds permitted, the Standards were being translated. Gender guidelines had been adopted. The United Nations had also worked actively with countries developing new technologies to meet the requirements of mine action operators in the field, who were themselves working closely with research and development agencies.

14. Under goal 5 regarding the mobilization and coordinated use of mine action resources, the annual portfolio of mine action projects now covered 35 countries, global projects and territories, and was electronically updated every three months. The portfolio process was in most cases led by national authorities, and in a number of countries was fully coordinated with the consolidated appeals process.

15. Under goal 6 on compliance with international instruments, the mine action team was participating actively in the work programme relating to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and in the deliberations under the Convention on Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects and it was working to obtain commitments from non-State actors to adhere to current international norms and halt the use of mines and other explosive devices.

16. The vast majority of the 48 objectives initially set under the six goals had already been achieved, and a full review of progress since 2001 was under way, as an action-oriented strategy for 2006-2010 was being developed. The focus would be on technical advances that would increase the effectiveness of operational activities. Other challenges included the mobilization of resources, especially alternative funding sources; the identification of countries with mine problems that

could be resolved in a period of three to five years with relatively modest sums of money, the furtherance of effective national oversight and operational capacities, which was a major priority, and the development of exit and transition strategies to shift the responsibility to national authorities. Throughout, the United Nations structures would be reviewed for cost efficiency.

17. **Ms. Kohn** (Mine Action Service, Department of Peacekeeping Operations), replying to the United Kingdom's second question, said that the gender guidelines had been issued in January 2005 to ensure that all United Nations mine action personnel in the field and at Headquarters considered the impact of gender in their work. The guidelines suggested points in a programme where gender considerations should be borne in mind or where it might be possible to achieve gender balance. In February 2005, a small mission had been sent to work with the Afghanistan mine action programme to test the guidelines and discuss gender mainstreaming with personnel familiar with the concept. As a result of that pilot mission, on which a report would soon be issued, a number of steps had been taken. A focal point who would regularly raise the gender issue had been designated within all programmes managed or supported by the United Nations and gender mainstreaming was applied early on in any programme so as to avoid missing opportunities. The Mine Action Service was reviewing all guidance and training documents used in the field, for the guidelines must not remain just a separate document on gender. A university had been commissioned to produce training materials as tools for mine action workers, and their use would be suggested to national authorities and non-governmental organizations. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping had brought the importance of the issue to the attention of all special representatives of the Secretary-General in the field; UNDP and UNICEF had done the same with their own country teams.

18. The guidelines themselves had not required revision, but they did need implementation. As they began to be applied, the mine action team was taking a focused and coordinated approach to the monitoring of the impact of gender-mainstreaming in all United Nations programmes.

19. **Mr. Hassan** (Jordan) said that a national mine action strategy had been implemented in his country in 1993. Its goals were to decrease the risk of death or injury from landmine accidents and to rehabilitate the demined areas in order to alleviate poverty and promote development for local communities. It had been announced in April 2003 that all stockpiles of anti-personnel mines had been destroyed. As of mid-2004, over one third of landmines had been removed from Jordanian territory, and the aim was for the country to be free of mines by 2009. His Government was committed to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines as a successful international forum and framework for mine action.

20. The National Committee for De-mining and Rehabilitation was the organ responsible for integrating all aspects of mine action and worked closely with the Royal Corps of Engineers, which was the sole demining operator in the country, although it was possible that a major foreign non-governmental organization would be invited to assist in meeting the 2009 deadline. Consideration could then be given to sharing the experience acquired by establishing a regional mine action training centre in the country and by expanding support for peacekeeping operations outside the country.

21. His country's key strategic objectives for the period 2005 to 2009 included a modified landmine impact survey the aim of which would be to obtain data on progress towards the 2009 deadline and to assess the human impact of mine action and its effect on development. It would be backed by a mobilization strategy. Funds must be raised so that it would be possible to continue providing assistance to victims and survivors beyond 2009, and to extend the campaign for mine risk education, which had begun in 2004 and targeted over 2.8 million Jordanians through the formal education system, the media and local communities. His Government was grateful to the international community for the support it had received to date for its work in demining. The projected budgets for 2005-2009 showed that more funding was sorely needed to meet the objectives.

22. His Government was considering hosting a regional conference in 2006 to discuss both the Ottawa Convention and the national strategic plan on mine action.

23. **Mr. Hunger** (Switzerland) said that living conditions for populations most affected by mines had improved significantly since the Ottawa Convention on Landmines and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons had become binding

instruments. Unfortunately over 40 States had not yet committed themselves to the ban on anti-personnel mines, and several countries and many non-State actors continued to produce and sell such mines.

24. The Mine Action Service had an important role to play as the focal point within the United Nations for action against personnel mines. Clear roles and responsibilities and coordination mechanisms were vital if the international community was to be able to take effective action against mines and explosive remnants of war all over the world.

25. His country's term as Chairman of the Mine Action Support Group, a group consisting of the main donor countries which met informally once a month to discuss mine action policies, was coming to an end after nearly two years. During that period, a dialogue between the members of the group and the United Nations had been promoted and specific examples of the positive role of mine action in the peace process had been considered. Mine action was often one of the first subjects on which conflicting parties could agree, and thus build confidence. The Mine Action Guidelines for Ceasefire and Peace Agreements were most useful in that context.

26. His Government was contributing some $12 million a year to mine action, and planned to finance demining projects, risk education projects, and assistance to the victims and advocates of mine action during the period 2004 to 2007. One of its principal commitments was in the form of support to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The Centre provided operational assistance to mine-affected countries, carried out research and provided instruments and support services to mine action programmes, such as the Information Management System for Mine Action and the International Mine Action Standards, as well as various field manuals. A post had been established at the Centre to assist Member States in implementing the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, and the mine action community was invited to make maximum use of the Centre's expertise and the infrastructure available in Geneva.

27. In 2006 and 2007 Switzerland and Afghanistan would co-chair the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration. His Government would seek to adopt a regional approach in that work and to highlight the role of mine action in the peace process and in development. He hoped that a resolution would be adopted at the current session on assistance to mine action, in order to raise public awareness and strengthen cooperation in the area.

28. **Mr. Li** Junhua (China) said that his Government attached great importance to the humanitarian problems caused by landmines. It supported the efforts of the international community to resolve the concerns of the countries affected, and had participated in international cooperation and assistance and demining efforts.

29. Since its accession in 1998 to the Protocol to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects, his country had complied strictly with its provisions through publicity and education and a comprehensive survey of old and obsolete landmines; those which were not consistent with those provisions had been revamped and destroyed in batches and stages. To date some 500,000 old and obsolete mines had been destroyed. Two large-scale demining actions had been conducted in the border regions, and landmines within Chinese territory had been removed.

30. His Government respected and commended the position of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines which had chosen to resolve humanitarian concerns by adopting a comprehensive ban on landmines. For objective reasons it was currently difficult for China and other countries with similar national conditions to accede to that Convention. However, it agreed with the purposes and objectives of the Convention and made every practical and feasible effort to resolve the humanitarian problems caused by landmines. His country attached great importance to increasing exchanges and cooperation with the States Parties to the Convention, it had frequently participated in meetings as an observer and was giving positive consideration to sending an observer delegation to the forthcoming Sixth Review Conference of the Convention in Croatia.

31. Since 1998, China had assisted some 10 Asian and African countries by sponsoring symposia, donating clearing equipment and sending experts to train demining personnel. China had joined the Mine Action Support Group in 2003. Together with the Australian chapter of the International Campaign to

Ban Landmines, it had organized an international symposium on humanitarian demining techniques and cooperation in Kunming, China, in 2004. A programme of mine-clearing assistance to Thailand had been launched in September 2005.

32. **Mr. Kittikhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) emphasized the need to intensify international cooperation in mine actions. Landmines and unexploded ordnance still threatened people and retarded development in many countries; that issue constituted one of the many serious obstacles to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the eradication of poverty.

33. His own country was one of those most seriously affected by unexploded ordnance. It was a small country with an area of 238,000 square kilometres on which over 2 million tons of bombs had been dropped during the Indochina war. The most intensive bombing had taken place between 1964 and 1973, and although the war had ended over 30 years earlier, 15 out of the 18 provinces were still seriously contaminated by unexploded ordnance.

34. In 1996 the Government had set up the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme, known as UXO Lao, in order to reduce the number of civilian casualties, and to increase the amount of land available for food production and development. That programme was currently fully operational in 9 of the 15 contaminated provinces and was implementing the national strategic 10-year plan introduced in 2003. The plan had three priorities: to conduct clearance of agricultural areas and increase public awareness; to enhance grazing land and forested and communal areas; and to promote tourism and private business and commercial sites. In 2004, the programme's area clearance teams had destroyed over 25,300 items of unexploded ordnance and cleared over 1,255 hectares of land, while roving teams had destroyed over 50,200 such items. Community awareness teams had made 495 visits to contaminated villages and educated some 125,000 people nationwide about the dangers of unexploded ordnance.

35. He was grateful to the international community for the technical and financial support his country had received and hoped fervently that its financial support of the UXO Lao programme would continue.

36. **Mr. Shutenko** (Ukraine) said that the prohibition of the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines could be ensured if as many States as possible acceded to amended Protocol II on mines and other devices and Protocol V on explosive remnants of war to the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons. The Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction should be applied universally. The Mine Action Service played a key role in policymaking, coordination and advocacy, and the Organization was open to Member States' suggestions on the coordination, integration and scope of mine action. Short-, medium- and long-term priorities should be established under national mine action strategies. National capacities should be built and assistance should be based on the needs of the mine-affected community. In countries where the presence of mines was an obstacle to post-conflict reconstruction, additional technical and financial assistance was necessary for mine clearance, stockpile destruction and the disposal of unexploded ordnance. Operational mine clearance should not eclipse other aspects of mine action, such as assistance to victims. The timely mobilization of donor resources was therefore essential. A recent United Nations mission to Ukraine, which was still experiencing the consequences of the uncontrolled use of mines during the Second World War, had identified requirements for assistance by the United Nations, other international institutions and the donor community. His country's advanced demining technology and logistic know-how could serve to train specialists in a short time. Its mine-clearance units applied United Nations standards and were available for participation in United Nations missions in various countries. Ukraine had ratified the Ottawa Convention on Landmines.

37. **Ms. Nuñez Mordoche** (Cuba) said that her country had steadfastly shared the international community's humanitarian concerns over the consequences of the irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines and of the failure to ensure effective post-conflict demining. It maintained that a country should bear full responsibility for the use of landmines in cases of national security, and it had consistently supported the resolution on mine action assistance. Member States should overcome the disagreements expressed during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly concerning the main goal of mine action assistance and the evaluation of United Nations mine action policy. The term "mine action" should only designate activities undertaken to solve problems

resulting from the indiscriminate use of landmines. The proposed resolution should therefore focus on humanitarian aspects, particularly international assistance, and not address any legal or security issues related to landmines. Member States should be responsible for implementing United Nations mine action policies, in accordance with the Charter and taking into account the Organization's programme and budget. Countries should be held legally and politically accountable for laying mines in the territory of other States.

38. The mobilization of international financial and technical assistance was an essential component of mine action. Demining should not divert attention from other important activities in that field. The promotion of such activities, for instance, through the provision of assistance to countries, upon request, for the implementation of rehabilitation and national capacity-building programmes, should be part of a comprehensive United Nations development strategy.

39. **Mr. Lake** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate country Croatia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union fully shared the United Nations vision for a world free of the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war. International mine action contributed towards global peace and stability and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It therefore remained a political priority for the European Union, which had allocated €384 million (US$ 340 million) for such activities since 2003. It had also included mine action in its multiannual programme and strategy for the period 2005 to 2007. The European Union strongly supported the Ottawa Convention on Landmines, to which 147 States had acceded; its universalization was essential. States Parties had been urged at the 2005 World Summit to fulfil their obligations under the Convention, in keeping with the First Review Conference in 2004 and the Nairobi Action Plan for the period 2005 to 2009. The sixth meeting of States Parties in Croatia later in 2005 should assess progress made towards the attainment of the Convention's humanitarian goals. Moreover, the provisions of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, in particular those of Protocol V on explosive remnants of war, should be strengthened. States Parties should ratify and implement that Protocol as soon as possible and report on their progress in ratification.

40. The European Union provided social, economic and medical assistance to countries affected by landmines. In view of the wide variety of stakeholders engaged in mine action activities, coordination was necessary in order to avoid duplication and to ensure effective utilization of resources, building on national capacity where possible. Mechanisms such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action and the Steering Committee on Mine Action could help to build consensus around policy, strategy and operational issues. The engagement and flexibility of all delegations should make it possible to adopt the proposed draft resolution by consensus, since it demonstrated the international community's collective resolve to address the challenge of landmines.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

United Nations A/C.4/60/SR.18

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 27 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Gujadhur (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Mauritius)

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Agenda item 27: Assistance in mine action (*continued*)

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05-57343 (E)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Gujadhur (Mauritius), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Assistance in mine action (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola) said that more financial and technical resources clearly had to be mobilized for mine action, especially to help countries emerging from long conflicts.

2. The forthcoming Sixth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction would offer an opportunity to assess progress since its adoption. A great many mines had in fact been cleared, the number of victims had fallen significantly in some countries, and more attention was being paid to helping survivors. The Meeting should, however, also set a clear agenda for dealing with the critical problems still faced by mine affected countries. Universal adherence to the Convention was crucial to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

3. In Angola, one of the most seriously mine affected countries in the world, landmines were impeding humanitarian and development work, endangering lives and hindering economic recovery. During the 27 years of civil war, 7 million landmines had been laid and virtually no record had been maintained as to their whereabouts. Most villages still remained inaccessible because of mined roads and, as a result, farmers could not transport produce to markets and refugees could not return to their homes. Reconstruction was hampered and the forthcoming elections would also be compromised.

4. With the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the international community, including non-governmental organizations, however, the Government had begun to tackle the problem. Having ratified the Convention, it had allocated substantial budget funds to mine action operations and was regularly updating them to reflect new strategies. Since 1996, Angola had with its partners, surveyed or marked thousands of kilometres and demined millions of square metres, and had destroyed almost 700,000 mines and unexploded ordnance. It had begun to educate the public about the risk of mines, and was emphasizing the physical rehabilitation of mine victims. Angola was one of some 30 countries which had in 2004 founded the Forum of Mine-Affected Countries, which were working together to identify ways of dealing with the landmine crises while at the same time working with the United Nations, the donor community and civil society. The previous year's report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/59/284) had recognized that donors should support mine action from their development and reconstruction budgets as well as their humanitarian emergency budgets.

5. The United Nations Mine Action Service had played a crucial coordinating role. Indeed, effective coordination and increased national ownership were fundamental to the success of mine action.

6. **Mr. Takase** (Japan) said that the First Review Conference of the Mine Ban Convention — the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World — had been the most significant event since the Convention had come into effect and that the Action Plan adopted at the Summit would set the course for the following five years.

7. At the Nairobi Summit, Japan, which thus far had contributed almost $200 million to more than 30 mine affected countries throughout the world, had announced that its new mine action policy for the following five years would emphasize the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Its mine action would follow three principles: consolidation of peace, human security and close cooperation between Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academia.

8. Japan had always supported mine action as a way of providing assistance to countries in the wake of conflict and it was currently helping to consolidate peace in Sudan in the fields of mine clearance and emergency response. It also attached importance to victim assistance and mine risk education with a view to protecting and empowering people and had set up a human security grant aid scheme to support activities in Cambodia, Sri Lanka and many other countries. The entire mine action sector in Japan was, moreover, involved in devising effective mine detection and clearance equipment and in the research and development of new and advanced technologies.

9. Under its new policy, Japan had already extended assistance to 32 projects in 12 countries on mine clearance, victim assistance and mine risk education. It

was aware of the need to integrate mine action into its development programme, strategy and budget, in order to provide the comprehensive and flexible approach that was needed.

10. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that the Mine Ban Convention had come about as a humanitarian response to a humanitarian crisis. Six years later, her delegation noted with satisfaction the substantial progress that had been made under all articles, including those relating to humanitarian mine action and victim assistance. There was, however, still reason for concern: in 50 out of 60 mine affected countries, survivor assistance was not adequate to meet the needs of new victims. Article 5 of the Convention made it obligatory for all States parties to clear all mines within 10 years of the entry into force for them of the Convention; and the forthcoming Sixth Meeting of States Parties should consider how to facilitate fulfilment of the obligations under article 5 so as to reach the goal of a mine-free world. The primary responsibility, of course, lay with the mine affected countries; the international community's contributions could only be supplemental. National ownership and coordination of mine action operations was essential. From the start of course, unique partnerships had been forged between mine affected countries, other States parties and non-governmental and international organizations, and those partnerships would continue to be important.

11. The vast majority of mine survivors were civilians, many of them children, and the families and communities of the victims were also affected. Victim assistance must therefore be broad in scope, involve the victims themselves in the process, and include both general health services and the reintegration of people with disabilities into active life, while offering support to their communities. Those were long-term commitments that had to be part of a country's general development plans and strategies.

12. Within the framework of the Convention, Norway, together with Nicaragua, had chaired the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration, which in the past year had focused on developing national capacities and, in accordance with the victims' own stated preferences, had concentrated on two issues: trauma care and socio-economic rehabilitation. Workshops organized in some of the 24 most mine affected countries in Africa and Central America had helped to establish national action plans for support to mine victims. In 2002, Norway had initiated the establishment of a resource mobilization contact group under the Convention. Current funding levels had to be maintained and new sources of funding secured, and funds had to be used in the most cost-effective way. Norway would continue to concentrate its own support on mine clearance, while at the same time involving and developing local capacity based on national and local ownership. It was one of her country's priorities to ensure that its support for mine action was gender sensitive; it believed that it was important to secure the participation of women in all areas of mine action.

13. The hallmark of the landmine process was the way it combined field experience and political action. That practical and operational approach must also guide future work.

14. **Ms. Holguín Cuéllar** (Colombia) said that, just as terrorist acts must be condemned, the manufacture and marketing of anti-personnel mines must be prohibited, for they too caused destruction, death and mutilation, and did so indiscriminately. Often, illegal terrorist armed groups funded by transnational organized crime were responsible for laying mines. Mine clearance was crucial in conflict and post-conflict situations.

15. Colombia had destroyed its stock of more than 18,000 anti-personnel mines, but demining was also essential as a component of a comprehensive policy of land recovery that would ensure the security of its rural sectors. The armed forces had small demining teams, but other smaller groups were being formed to accelerate the work.

16. Her Government was also developing a mine risk education strategy, involving non-governmental organizations, local authorities, community leaders and the public. A general register of mine victims had been kept since 1990 and a list of individual cases since 2005, in order to monitor prompt victim assistance. Priority was being given to comprehensive care for child and adolescent victims and international funds had been donated for the remodelling of certain hospitals for the purpose.

17. Colombia very much appreciated the international cooperation it had received. The complexity of the problem created by anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance required the involvement of all State authorities and civil society in Colombia and, of course, international cooperation in

coordination with the Government's own national strategic plan.

18. **Mr. Getachew** (Ethiopia) said that his country attached considerable importance to the issue of mine action, recognizing it as an essential element of the humanitarian and development activities of the United Nations, in which the Mine Action Service played a key role.

19. Ethiopia had acceded to the Ottawa Convention in 2004, believing that doing so would help to create the momentum for its universal ratification. The growing number of ratifications by Member States had created a strong moral impetus in establishing rules that restrained States as well as non-State actors from using anti-personnel land mines.

20. Ethiopia, with 2 million land mines and items of unexploded ordnance throughout the country and with 1.9 million of its people living in mine-infested areas, was among the most mine affected countries in the world. According to a nationwide survey completed in March 2004, mine and unexploded ordnance incidents had killed 588 people and injured 737 between 2002 and 2004 alone.

21. The presence of landmines had a crucial impact on development. They impeded productive activities, particularly in rural areas. The need for mine clearance activities placed tremendous financial pressure on the public budget, which was already subject to daunting competition among priorities. Ethiopia had undertaken various forms of mine action aimed at resolving the problem. The Ethiopian Mine Action Office, established with the mandate of carrying out humanitarian demining and related activities, had overseen the clearance of 17.9 million square metres of land, the destruction of 18,330 landmines and items of unexploded ordnance, and the provision of landmine risk education to 2,388,084 people. As a result of those activities, accidents from mines had been reduced significantly and a considerable number of people had been able to return to their homes to resume their normal lives.

22. As recent survey findings indicated, however, landmines and items of unexploded ordnance remained scattered in many parts of the country; that was a clear indication of the need to boost mine action. In view of the scale of the problem and the Government's limited resources and technical capability, it would have been quite difficult for the country to tackle it without help from the international community, to which he expressed his country's gratitude for its generous and ongoing support.

23. **Mr. Morote** (Peru) said that for several years, his delegation had expressed Peru's political will to bring about the total eradication of anti-personnel mines, since they were an inhumane weapon. It was imperative to put an end to the suffering they caused, mutilating and killing hundreds of people every day around the world, mostly innocent and defenceless civilians, especially children and women. Mines obstructed economic development, delaying and increasing the cost of reconstruction. They inhibited the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced people, not only during conflicts but also in post-conflict situations, making it difficult for the country to forget and reconcile and to rebuild international trust, peace and stability for the long term.

24. The Ottawa Convention was the leading international instrument in the fight against anti-personnel mines. As with any human endeavour, there was much work still to do. His delegation hoped that more countries would join the 144 States that were already parties to the Convention.

25. His delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/284), notably its conclusions, namely, that there was a need to integrate a development perspective into mine action planning, to emphasize the role of mine affected communities when determining mine action priorities, and to address gender concerns in the design, implementation and evaluation of mine action programmes. It also agreed that United Nations efforts had encouraged increased cooperation among mine affected States. His delegation had participated actively in the discussions on the draft resolution, and intended to join the sponsors.

26. He drew attention to the joint experience of Peru and Ecuador in humanitarian mine clearance as a confidence-building measure and as part of the fight against poverty and of the national development effort, particularly in the areas affected by mines along the common frontier. As it had done at the First Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, in November 2004, Peru wished to report on progress in its bilateral agreements. Peru and Ecuador would continue to carry out joint projects; execute joint reconnaissances; exchange technical experience, equipment and

information on possible dangerous areas; plan combined mine clearance operations; share medical evacuation plans; undertake joint prevention campaigns; and share information. The results of the shared experience confirmed that such cooperation strengthened peaceful relations and provided a shared vision of the problems and solutions. Together, Ecuador and Peru could protect their populations, particularly their indigenous populations, from the scourge of mines. To continue their work, they would need the sustained and invaluable support of the international community, the United Nations, its agencies and international bodies. Peru was grateful to countries such as Canada and the United States and to intergovernmental organizations such as the Organization of American States, the European Union and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as to the Geneva Centre for International Humanitarian Demining, for their support over several years. Joint humanitarian mine clearance would unite and strengthen Peruvians and Ecuadorians. Now was the time to renew the ties of bilateral and international cooperation, and to reaffirm the conviction that signing the Ottawa Convention had been the right way to bring about a mine-free world.

27. **Ms. Mladineo** (Croatia) said that, to its misfortune, Croatia's period of independence virtually coincided with the length of time it had been affected by mine-related problems. It had progressed a long way from being a country with serious problems with mine affected areas, to one that had learned to deal with those problems, including their humanitarian, social and economic effects. Much of that progress had come through the painful process of learning from experience, often at the expense of the personal losses of the brave deminers who had taken it upon themselves to cleanse their country of such terrible relics of war. At the same time, the substantial assistance of the international community and the United Nations had been very important, and Croatia gratefully acknowledged it.

28. Great importance had been attached to education and training for all the actors involved: from mine experts to ordinary people living in the mine affected areas. Croatia had established the Mine Action Academy-International Studies of Humanitarian Demining, at the Polytechnic College of Velika Gorica. The Croatian Mine Action Centre had been established, incorporating the Centre for Testing of Demining Machines and Equipment. Workshops such as "Children in a Mined Environment" which had been organized for pupils at elementary schools, were evidence of the fruitful cooperation among the Croatian Mine Action Centre, the Red Cross, local authorities and the schools themselves.

29. Croatia was fully aware of the need to share its knowledge and experience, and had participated in intensive international cooperation in every element of mine action. The importance it attached to such cooperation stemmed not only from the obligations it had undertaken in ratifying the Ottawa Convention, or its position as a factor of regional stability, but also from its belief that mine action was an area where its national experience could assist others. The establishment of the Council for Coordination of Mine Action Activities had developed an already fruitful exchange of knowledge and experience within south-east Europe. Such regional cooperation was a milestone on the road to a mine-free world, and Croatia stood ready to share its experience with any mine affected country or region.

30. The forthcoming Sixth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, to be held in Croatia later in the year, would offer not only another chance to proceed further along the road towards a mine-free world, but also an opportunity to measure further progress towards the full implementation of the goals of the Ottawa Convention, and to appeal once again to those countries that had not yet done so to recognize and comply with the Convention's simple message of a safer world.

31. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) expressed the view that the discussion needed to be focused on humanitarian demining, including assistance in mine clearance and the rehabilitation of mine victims, as well as the raising of awareness and national capacity-building in mine affected States with regard to modern demining techniques. The development and implementation of the policies, strategies and activities of the Organization related to mine action must be approved and reviewed by the Member States. Any attempt, direct or indirect, to impose treaty obligations on non-States parties in the name of assistance in mine clearance and mine action should not be allowed.

32. Pakistan supported the eventual elimination of anti-personnel mines. It had, however, been unable to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty because of its legitimate

security concerns. It would be difficult to bring about a universal ban on landmines unless and until viable alternatives were available. In the interim, Pakistan was favourably disposed towards negotiating an international legal instrument banning the transfer of anti-personnel landmines at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

33. Pakistan was a party to amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which allowed responsible uses of landmines. Consistent with its obligations under the Protocol, Pakistan had regulated the use of anti-personnel mines, by, inter alia, effectively excluding civilians from mined areas through marking, fencing and monitoring. It had produced only detectable anti-personnel mines since 1 January 1997, and had declared a voluntary unilateral moratorium on the export of landmines in March 1997.

34. Millions of civilians were still threatened by unexploded mines and ordnance, which placed a heavy burden on the social and economic reconstruction of war-ravaged countries. It was therefore clearly necessary to put more resources and efforts into mine clearance operations, and into socio-economic rehabilitation and development.

35. His delegation spoke on the issue on the basis of his country's accomplished record of contribution to the collective effort. Known for their high professional standards, Pakistani troops had been confidently employed by the United Nations in various humanitarian demining operations, with excellent results. Pakistani peacekeeping contingents had also voluntarily offered to assist local authorities in mine clearance. Pakistan had also participated in demining operations under United Nations auspices in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Eastern Slovenia, Kuwait, Somalia and Western Sahara. It had also provided training assistance for humanitarian demining in Sri Lanka, and would be contributing to the mine clearance operations in the Sudan.

36. From its experience in demining, Pakistan had drawn several conclusions: a response signal of 8 grams or more of iron was not the only method to ensure the detectability of mines; mines laid by professional armed forces, if duly marked, fenced and monitored, remained 100 per cent detectable to the user and posed minimum humanitarian risk; technologically advanced mine detectors ensured effective demining, even of non-detectable mines; and the detectability of mines other than anti-personnel mines was not linked to the success of humanitarian demining operations. Moreover, although demining of areas being fought over by warring factions was admittedly difficult, Pakistan's experience had proved that an integrated approach like the one practised in Angola and Kuwait, while time-consuming, labour-intensive and fraught with dangers for the deminers, could overcome the difficulties and achieve the desired objectives.

37. In conclusion, he said his delegation hoped that all Member States would keep the humanitarian dimension of the issue foremost in their considerations and that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

38. **Ms. Meyer** (Canada) said that landmines and explosive remnants of war continued to litter many countries around the world. They posed a direct threat to life and limb, inhibited the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, and presented a major obstacle to sustainable development. Despite great progress in recent years, they continued indiscriminately to kill or injure 15,000 to 20,000 people annually; that was 1,500 casualties a month, 40 casualties a day, or at least 2 new casualties an hour, in direct victims alone. Many more suffered and died because of the indirect but no less lethal impact of landmines. A child who died of malnutrition in an area where landmines prevented access to vital agricultural land was as much a mine victim as the child who was struck down directly.

39. The Ottawa Convention remained, for Canada and the other 147 States parties, the definitive international instrument within which to address all elements of mine action. At the First Review Conference of the Convention — the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World — States parties had developed an ambitious and visionary 70-point Nairobi Action Plan that would guide activities for the following five-year period. Her country looked forward to the Sixth Meeting of States Parties, which was to take place in Croatia later in the year, as a further means of measuring the progress made towards the realization of the Convention's humanitarian goals.

40. Canada greatly appreciated the efforts of those engaged in mine action globally, including many States that were not yet parties to the Convention. It stressed the importance of cooperation and coordination to

ensure the most effective utilization of resources, building on national capacity wherever possible. Special appreciation was due to the United Nations — in particular the Mine Action Service, UNDP and UNICEF — to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Geneva Centre for International Humanitarian Demining and the non-governmental organizations that engaged in mine action. Canada also recognized the initiatives undertaken by mine affected States to build national capacity for mine action, including their provision of financial resources. It also commended the engagement by States emerging from conflict in joint mine action and mine clearance activities as a confidence-building measure.

41. Although the United Nations had not yet adopted a formal definition of mine action, it was widely understood within the mine action community — within and outside the Ottawa process — to include the following five main elements: humanitarian demining, stockpile destruction, mine risk education, victim assistance, and advocacy for all aspects of mine action. To save lives in the short term, it was often necessary to survey and mark the location of landmines and to make people aware of their dangers until the painstaking and expensive clearance operations could be carried out. There was also an ongoing need to meet the needs of landmine survivors. For those and other reasons, it was essential always to refer to "mine action", which included, but was not limited to, mine clearance.

42. Canada had contributed in excess of $200 million to mine action since the Ottawa Convention had entered into force in 1999, mostly from the dedicated Canadian Landmine Fund. Increasingly, however, the Canadian International Development Agency was contributing funds for mine action from Canada's official development assistance envelope, as an effective means of helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, Canada strongly encouraged mine affected States to build mine action into their national development plans and into all relevant sector strategies; to invest the resources they were able to in mine action, and to bring mine action forward as a development priority in negotiations with the international development community where the degree of landmine contamination warranted it. Those steps would diversify the resource base for mine action, help to meet mine action targets, and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

43. **Mr. Gebreel** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy had failed to shoulder their responsibility for clearing the landmines which they had planted on his country's soil during the Second World War. Thousands of deaths and injuries had been caused by those landmines and other explosive remnants of war, which had also prevented the reclamation and cultivation of extensive areas of Libyan land. States which planted mines had the prime responsibility for assisting in their clearance by providing maps, equipment and technology, as well as expert help in rehabilitating those disabled by such mines. His country wished to state that any resolution adopted on the subject should encompass that responsibility. A review of Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was urgently required so that it could be amended to deal with the effects of war remnants from the first half of the twentieth century and affirm the responsibility of States for the clearance of mines planted by them in the territory of other States.

44. **Mr. Ortega** (Ecuador) said that his country shared the Organization's vision of a world completely free of landmines. It considered mine action to be both a disarmament and a development issue which deserved the international community's support. Ecuador's mine action initiatives, undertaken with assistance from Canada and the United States as part of the Integral Action against Anti-personnel Mines of the Organization of American States, had been exemplary. Ecuador and Peru were the only countries in the region which had successfully carried out joint post-conflict mine action, including the exchange of information, thereby enabling neighbouring sections of their population to travel and work in safety. The international community should continue to provide financial support, especially for Member States in post-conflict situations. Ecuador, which had destroyed all its stocks of anti-personnel mines, called for universal adherence to the Ottawa Convention. It hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus and welcomed initiatives undertaken to that end by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

45. **Mr. Thema** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/59/284) clearly

outlined the tasks ahead. All States members of the Community had acceded to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Countries in the region had suffered from the deployment of landmines, anti-tank mines and unexploded ordnance in their territories and along their borders during civil wars and in the course of the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles. The prevalence of landmines had in many cases stunted economic growth. The Southern African Development Community therefore urged the international community to provide resources to fight the use of landmines, which — along with small arms and light weapons — were a scourge in the region.

46. Although many countries devoted resources to mine action, such as mine clearance programmes and victim assistance operations, much remained to be done. Diplomatic efforts to convince ever more States to join in the fight should continue and it was important to address the responsibility of those still engaged in the production, stockpiling, export and use of landmines. The members of SADC welcomed the African Union declaration on the common African position on anti-personnel landmines adopted at the Second Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines in 2004; they welcomed the continuous growth in the number of States parties to the Ottawa Convention; and they supported the Nairobi Action Plan for the period 2005-2009 formulated at the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention in 2004. Encouraged by the European Union's efforts, SADC urged States parties to implement the Convention and called upon other countries to accede to it. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus. Lastly, he commanded the work carried out by the Mine Action Service and by non-governmental organizations.

47. **Mr. Chaimongkol** (Thailand) was gratified that the objectives of the United Nations mine action strategy for 2001-2005 had been achieved and that the Organization was conducting a comprehensive review in order to achieve a more action-oriented and results-based strategy for the period 2006-2010. He welcomed the integrated approach that the Organization was taking with regard to mine action by coordinating the departments, programmes, funds and agencies concerned through the Mine Action Service and the Steering Committee on Mine Action.

48. With regard to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, he emphasized the importance of mine action, particularly mine clearance, which could be essential in the initial stage of the peacebuilding process. Mine clearance was not only a confidence-building measure conducive to cooperation and effective coordination, but also a key to long-term post-conflict recovery and development. By demining and reclaiming land, which was an essential factor in production, post-conflict States could use the land for agriculture and road construction.

49. Thailand, which had destroyed its entire stockpile of anti-personnel mines in 2003, had steadily supported activities by government agencies and non-governmental organizations aimed at raising awareness of the danger and impact of landmines. In August 2004 it had organized a regional workshop on the Development Challenges of Mine Clearance and Victim Assistance in South-East Asia. Moreover, Thailand believed that landmine victims should be treated as assets rather than liabilities and allocated resources to provide victim assistance in the forms of hospital improvement and social reintegration programmes. The Thai Mine Action Centre had received support from the Japan Alliance for Humanitarian Demining Support since 2002, and from China, in the form of training and equipment, under a bilateral agreement on mine cooperation concluded in 2005. According to a joint survey by the Thai Mine Action Centre and the Norwegian People's Aid, Thailand had so far demined only about 0.13 per cent of its affected area of about 2,500 square kilometres. Much work still lay ahead and Thailand would welcome effective cooperation with the international community.

50. Along with other State parties to the Ottawa Convention, Thailand was determined to fulfil its commitments under the Nairobi Action Plan for the period 2005-2009. To that end, it was integrating mine action into its national development plans. It invited other States to do the same and urged donor countries to continue to contribute to the international humanitarian demining efforts.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 19th meeting
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Chairman:	Mr. Aliyev	(Azerbaijan)
later:	Mr. Gerts (Vice-Chairman)	(Netherlands)

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Agenda item 28: Effects of atomic radiation

Agenda item 116: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

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05-57628 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 28: Effects of atomic radiation (A/60/46)

1. **Mr. Crick** (Secretary of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation) said that, until his recent appointment, he had for over two decades been a keen user of the substantive scientific reports produced by the Scientific Committee, which were held in very high esteem by the international scientific community and formed the basis of standards for radiation protection.

2. There had admittedly been recent budgetary problems that impinged upon the Scientific Committee's work, but it was his understanding that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was making arrangements to address those issues so that the Scientific Committee could work reliably and effectively.

3. April 2006 would mark the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident; the spotlight would therefore also be on the Scientific Committee since it had played an important role in providing the scientific basis for understanding radiation-induced health effects. The year 2006 would also mark the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Scientific Committee itself, and would be an occasion to reflect on the challenges ahead.

4. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan, Chairman of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation) said that, since its establishment by the General Assembly in 1955, the Scientific Committee had served the vital function of providing authoritative scientific review of the sources and effects of ionizing radiation. Although its original mandate had been to assess and report levels and effects of exposure to ionizing radiation, the role of the Committee had been adapted to address new challenges arising from radiation exposure, such as diseases other than cancer, effects on the immunological system and effects on non-human biota. As a result, Governments and organizations throughout the world now relied on the Scientific Committee's estimates as the scientific basis for evaluating radiation risk, establishing radiation protection and safety standards and regulating radiation sources. Within the United Nations system, those estimates were used by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the discharge of its statutory functions of establishing health standards with respect to radiation and providing for their application. In addition, the information provided by the Scientific Committee assisted the General Assembly in making recommendations, in particular those relevant to international cooperation in the health field.

5. The year 2006 would mark the twentieth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. In that connection, he welcomed the Scientific Committee's continuous contribution in providing the scientific background for a better understanding of the radiation health effects of that accident. There was some concern, however, that the current level of funding for the Scientific Committee's work was inadequate, that would result in a diminished effectiveness at a time when authoritative reviews of the effects of radiation were likely to take on increasing importance.

6. Introducing the draft resolution which was to be circulated (A/C.4/60/L.8), he explained that it requested the Scientific Committee to continue to review the important problems in the field of ionizing radiation. It also requested UNEP to continue to provide support for the effective conduct of the work of the Scientific Committee, and to review and strengthen the current funding, so that the Scientific Committee could discharge its responsibilities and mandate. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

7. **Mr. La Rosa Dominguez** (Cuba) said that the Scientific Committee was a source of specialized, balanced and objective information, and that the high quality of its reports made them reference documents for the adoption of national and international standards for protecting the public against the effects of ionizing radiation.

8. The current year marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki massacres, in which many thousands had died as a result of the atomic bombs dropped on them without the slightest respect for human life, and many thousands more as a result of the lingering effects of radiation. His country reaffirmed its strong opposition to the use of nuclear energy for purposes of war and its unwavering commitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

9. The health effects of the Chernobyl accident, one of the items discussed by the Scientific Committee at its fifty-third session, was especially important in view

of the fact that 2006 would mark the twentieth anniversary of that event. Earlier in 2005, Cuba and Ukraine had themselves commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of a humanitarian programme under which child victims of Chernobyl for whom there were no facilities in Ukraine had been brought to Cuba for treatment and rehabilitation. His country was pleased that, despite an illegal blockade by the United States Government which had had an impact on its health sector, particularly on that programme, it had been able to mitigate in a modest way some of the consequences of the tragic accident. Thus far, over 18,000 children had been treated in Cuba, with 500 to 800 new patients received each year; moreover, since 1998, a small Cuban medical team had been working in Ukraine with a sanatorium for persons with Chernobyl-related injuries, and had thus far treated over 10,000 patients. The humanitarian programme had also had a real scientific impact, having produced primary data on internal contamination in infants, data which had been used by United Nations bodies such as IAEA and the Scientific Committee in their research.

10. The Scientific Committee must continue to forge stronger bonds with the various agencies of the United Nations system, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), IAEA and UNEP. Their concerted efforts would result in greater benefits for humanity in the areas of health and environmental protection. Budgetary problems must not be allowed to hamper the Scientific Committee's work. His delegation was convinced that serious and wide-ranging cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy was the only way to eliminate the potential dangers of ionizing radiation.

11. *Mr. Gerts (Netherlands), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

12. **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation shared the concern expressed in the report of the Scientific Committee on its fifty-third session (A/60/46) that lack of funding was hampering its work. It hoped that UNEP would increase funding for the biennium 2008-2009 and called on all Member States and United Nations agencies to comply with the Special Committee's requests for information.

13. His country had acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and had negotiated a comprehensive safeguards agreement with IAEA. In 2003 it had submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. His country believed that nuclear radiation was seeping out of Israeli installations directly into neighbouring States and from them into the rest of the world, and would continue to do so unless Israel submitted its nuclear facilities to the IAEA inspection regime in accordance with paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 487 (1981).

14. The Syrian Arab Republic had drawn attention in other United Nations forums to the dangers of burying nuclear waste in the ground or dumping it at sea. It regarded such acts as violations of international law, especially when carried out without supervision by a competent international agency. Firm international resolve and cooperation was necessary to combat the deadly danger of nuclear radiation.

15. **Ms. Myint** (Myanmar) noted that the Scientific Committee would be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in March 2006. Her delegation wished to commend it for its tireless efforts over five decades to keep the Member States well informed about sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment. Its assessments provided the scientific foundation used by the International Commission on Radiological Protection in developing its recommendations on radiation protection and by the relevant agencies in the United Nations system in formulating the International Basic Safety Standards for Protection against Ionizing Radiation and for the Safety of Radiation Sources.

16. Facing limited resources in fossil fuels, mankind had to turn to nuclear power as an alternative source of energy. With the growing use of nuclear power came the increased risk of exposure to atomic radiation through leakage and nuclear accidents, such as that at Chernobyl, which still haunted the collective memory. Her country was also troubled by the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the possibilities of their falling into the hands of terrorists. The danger of atomic radiation remained an important issue not only to countries that had suffered from the results of nuclear tests or accidents, but also to those exposed to the dangers stemming from other sources of radiation such as nuclear electricity generation and exposure to man-made or naturally occurring sources.

17. Myanmar was one of the countries that had been exercising the legitimate right of peaceful use of atomic energy for development purposes in cooperation

with IAEA. It was highly appreciative of the sustained assistance provided to it by IAEA, in particular in the areas of medicine, agriculture, human resources development, nuclear engineering and technology and nuclear safety, radiotherapy, nuclear methods of diagnosis and nuclear technique for medical research and industry. With the help of IAEA, Myanmar had embarked on a programme of promoting and developing nuclear applications. It was aware of the need for adequate radiation protection and waste safety infrastructure. Its regulations for the safe use of radiation and nuclear energy were almost complete. Myanmar was a party to the Regional Cooperative Agreement for the Asia and Pacific region, under the auspices of IAEA.

18. Given the critical role of the Scientific Committee, her delegation called for an adequate operating budget to be allocated to it. It also hoped that UNEP would provide additional resources for it in the biennium 2006-2007, since its work fully deserved the continued support and cooperation of all Member States and the relevant United Nations specialized agencies.

19. **Mr. Williams** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Scientific Committee remained the principal international body in its field. The quality of its work was such that in the drafting of national and international standards its reports were used as a basis, that in turn protected populations against the effects of ionizing radiation. The European Union fully supported the work programme adopted by the Scientific Committee at its fifty-third session, especially its ongoing work on the health effects of the Chernobyl accident and on the effects of low-dose radiation. Many observers from United Nations agencies and international bodies had attended the Scientific Committee's session, and he welcomed the exchange of information and cooperation. The European Union reiterated its full support for the Scientific Committee and the essential, authoritative and independent information it produced.

20. **Ms. Karun** (Ukraine) said that her delegation was looking forward to the publication by the Scientific Committee of the detailed scientific annexes to a 2006 report to the General Assembly mentioned in its report (A/60/46, para. 5). All Member States, specialized agencies and other international and national scientific bodies should, as requested by the Scientific Committee, provide information to ensure the completeness of its reviews.

21. Her delegation was concerned that the effectiveness of the Scientific Committee's work might be diminished owing to an inadequate operating budget, especially when public interest was expected to increase at the time of the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident and the forthcoming revision of the International Basic Safety Standards for Protection against Ionizing Radiation and for the Safety of Radiation Sources. She understood, however, that the necessary measures had been taken.

22. Her delegation welcomed the Scientific Committee's participation in the recent Chernobyl Forum and expected that it would continue to provide the scientific basis for a better understanding of radiation-induced health effects. The twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident — which had changed the world's attitude to nuclear energy — would provide an opportunity to review accomplishments and outline a plan for future action. Her Government would on that occasion hold an international conference on the outlook for the future, to which it invited the Scientific Committee and all interested countries and organizations to take part. The Conference would promote the application of up-to-date international expertise on issues such as radiation protection, medical and biological consequences of radiological accidents, and economic and legal aspects of radioactive waste management and the decommissioning of nuclear power plants.

23. Her delegation endorsed the activities planned by the Scientific Committee to commemorate its own fiftieth anniversary, which were aimed at raising awareness of its activities outside the traditional scientific community, and it hoped that, as it pursued its work, the Scientific Committee would call upon his country's considerable expertise in dealing with the effects of radiation.

24. **Mr. Loedel** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, said that it was extremely important for the international community to be able to assess the effects of atomic radiation on those exposed to it, in order to reach scientifically valid conclusions.

25. In view of the concern over radiation contamination of the environment the work that the Scientific Committee was doing on the risks associated with exposure to natural sources of radiation was very valuable, as was its study of radionuclide transfers in the environment. Over the past half century, the kind and quality of work done by the Scientific Committee had made a definite contribution to a safer environment. Its conclusions continued to be recognized and used by major international bodies and United Nations agencies. The Scientific Committee's report on its fifty-third session (A/60/46) confirmed its prestige and the future work programme it had set out deserved support. It had made a good decision to commemorate its own fiftieth anniversary by raising awareness of its activities outside the traditional scientific community.

26. The MERCOSUR and associated countries remained committed to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and the international agreements and mechanisms to which they were parties guaranteed peaceful use and permitted the free exchange of material and technology among their scientific institutions.

Agenda item 116: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

27. **The Chairman** drew attention to document A/C.4/60/WP.2 containing a non-paper on the revitalization of the work of the Fourth Committee, which the Committee had approved earlier in the year and which had now been circulated as a working paper to be used as a reference by the Ad Hoc Working Group on the issue of revitalization. The Committee would consider it, together with its draft programme of work for the sixty-first session, at a subsequent meeting.

28. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran), referring to paragraph 11 of the non-paper, asked whether the General Committee or the General Assembly would decide whether the item "Effects of atomic radiation" should remain on the Fourth Committee's agenda and if a discussion in the Committee was needed.

29. **The Chairman** said that such issues would be discussed by the Ad Hoc Working Group.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations A/C.4/60/SR.20

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

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Summary record of the 20th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 November 2005, at 2.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev ..... (Azerbaijan)

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05-58166 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 2.40 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Effects of atomic radiation
(*continued*)

1. **Mr. Mohideen** (India) said that the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation had immense implications for the health of thousands of occupational workers, people undergoing radiation-based medical procedures, people living in areas of the world with high natural background radiation and the general public, and for the protection of the environment. The scientific annexes to its reports that it would produce in 2006 and 2007 would reflect its latest assessments and should prove very interesting.

2. Cancer remained the main concern among radiation-induced health effects, although many factors entered into the disease. There were very few hard data on the health effects of low-dose radiation. New scientific insights into cell death, DNA damage and repair, and immune system reactions were enriching the debate in the scientific community on the risk of low-dose exposures, which recent research had indicated might not always be deleterious. The current conflict of opinion on the health effects of natural and medical low-dose radiation exposure needed to be resolved by the collection of more direct data, both ecological and epidemiological. International agencies should support epidemiological studies on populations living in areas with high background radiation such as India, China, Iran and Brazil, covering not just cancer but also genetic anomalies, and the results should be critically analysed.

3. India welcomed the Scientific Committee's participation, along with international and United Nations agencies, in the recent Chernobyl Forum. Its efforts should help to provide a fuller picture of the health effects of that accident.

4. The United Nations should provide the Scientific Committee with a strong budget that would allow it to conduct its work effectively and employ qualified consultants.

Adoption of draft resolution on the effects of atomic radiation (A/C.4/60/L.8)

5. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolution which was not expected to give rise to any programme budget implications. He announced that Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Turkey had joined the sponsors.

6. **Mr. Frydenlund** (Norway) said that Norway also wished to sponsor the draft resolution.

7. *Draft resolution A/C.4/60/L.8 was adopted.*

Agenda item 30: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(A/60/13 and A/60/439)

8. **Ms. AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), introducing the annual report of UNRWA covering the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 (A/60/13), said that the Agency had for over five decades provided educational, health and social services to the Palestine refugees in five fields of operation: Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Sixty per cent of its budget went to education, which was of central importance to the refugees themselves, and was of high quality. The Agency's health-care services had also been praised recently by the World Health Organization (WHO) for their comprehensive range. The Agency's social safety net, which provided the bare essentials of life — shelter, food and water — had been another important feature from the start. Currently, food and cash were being offered to over 60,000 families living in particular hardship, and community-based efforts to promote the empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups were also being supported. The Agency's microfinance and microcredit programme, which had been in operation for almost 15 years, was a relative newcomer to the Agency. It was now the largest provider of microcredit in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the programme had been expanded into the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. Some $18 million in loans — a 34 per cent increase over 2004 — had been offered in the course of the year, and repayment rates were high, despite the economic decline.

9. The Agency faced many hurdles, not least among them the austerity measures introduced in the mid-1990s. The resulting funding shortfalls had fundamentally affected the quality of UNRWA services and the ability to attract and retain qualified staff. The Agency had been unable to invest in maintenance and new buildings, especially schools; double shifts and

crowded classrooms were now the norm. Without more funds, the Agency would be unable to maintain the quality of even basic health care. In order to reach all refugees in need, it was having to shift its relief and food aid from a status-based to a needs-based approach.

10. The additional emergency programme for the distribution of food and necessities that UNRWA had been operating since the crisis in late 2000 in the occupied Palestinian territory had generated sought-after short-term jobs for refugees whose incomes had collapsed as a result of closures and continuing violence. Refugees whose homes had been destroyed — some 16,000 of them currently — were provided with temporary accommodation until new housing could be built.

11. The operational environments were different in each of the five areas in which the Agency worked, and were constantly changing. The plight of Palestine refugees had historically been most difficult in Lebanon, primarily because of limitations on employment. The Government, however, had recently announced plans to open up job access to the refugees and to improve living conditions in the camps in the country, that was a most welcome change that warranted strong encouragement. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Government had been extremely helpful in promoting innovative housing improvements, and in Jordan, refugees enjoyed wide access to services and also to citizenship.

12. In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the wider political circumstances drastically affected the lives of refugees and UNRWA operations could not function without both Israel's facilitation and the Palestinian Authority's support and cooperation. During the Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip in the first part of the reporting period, the violence had killed 23 UNRWA pupils; Israel had failed in its obligation to protect Palestinian children while protecting its own citizens. Internally, there had been a smooth transition of power within the Palestinian Authority, and the Agency enjoyed excellent working relations with it at all levels. It was the Authority's view that UNRWA must continue to serve the Palestine refugees even after Israel's disengagement, until the refugee issue was settled in final-status negotiations.

13. The latter part of the reporting period had seen a welcome respite from military incursions and house demolitions and the population of the occupied Palestinian territory had been further encouraged by Israel's disengagement. The Agency had been working closely with the Special Envoy for Disengagement of the Quartet team on how best to channel aid for positive change and economic improvement. In the immediate term, the Agency had focused on microcredit, job creation and the reconstruction of demolished houses, and it was poised to expand activities whenever additional funds were made available. It supported the Special Envoy's message and the World Bank's warning about the need for economic openings and freer movement of people and goods from Gaza into the West Bank. Currently, 1.3 million Palestinians found themselves trapped in a small area with no link to the West Bank, to Israel or to the outside world. Israel's construction of the separation barrier bore heavily on the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank, ghettoizing the Palestinian communities there and depriving them of access to parts of their own lands and to places of work, education and health care. The barrier also made the Agency's daily operations difficult. The apparent resumption of another cycle of violence and counter-violence was disquieting. The Agency's emergency programme remained a vital safety net to refugees in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and it might be required for some time to come.

14. The Agency's medium-term plan, which had been presented a year earlier, was being regularly updated in consultation with stakeholders. Recently, UNRWA had proposed the expansion of its Advisory Commission, and it had embarked on a comprehensive data collection process to improve its own ability to ascertain and monitor needs, while awaiting the results of a study to help it to improve gender mainstreaming. The Agency was also engaged in intense internal discussions on organizational reform and on a timetable for the introduction of changes. The discussions would continue at a forthcoming meeting of hosts and donors later in the month.

15. The Agency's achievements in recent years were, she believed, quite remarkable, especially considering the conditions under which it had been operating, its skeleton managerial staff, limited resources, and the need, for security reasons, to relocate almost all international headquarters staff outside the Gaza Strip. At the same time, the Agency's tasks were growing to meet increasingly complex needs.

16. As the embodiment of the international community's commitment to the Palestine refugees, UNRWA deserved its support. The needs-based budget prepared for the 2006-2007 biennium was some 30 per cent higher than that for the previous biennium. It detailed what was required both to halt a decline in service quality and to meet the objectives of the medium-term plan. If the international community and UNRWA worked together, the Agency would be able to meet the challenges before it.

17. **Mr. Adel** (Egypt) asked the Commissioner-General whether the Advisory Commission would receive more funding because of its proposed expansion.

18. **Ms. AbuZayd** (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that there would be no new financing for the additional members, but that more funds would be needed for a Commission secretariat. The point of the expansion was to engage the Commission more formally in the work of the Agency and to make it a more structured body.

19. **Mr. Frydenlund** (Norway), introducing the report of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (A/60/439), said that, even though the Agency's financial balance had improved, that trend might not be maintained. Moreover, there was still a gap between assessed needs and available funds. The Commissioner-General's fund-raising efforts should continue and a broader base of donors should be sought. Governments should increase their contributions, honour their pledges or start contributing to the Agency's biennium budget and medium-term plan. The budget for the biennium 2006-2007 was based on needs and was designed to reverse the effects of successive years of underfunding, raise the standard of services and build the Agency's capacity. He called for the early fulfilment of pledges and commitments to UNRWA, in particular the reimbursement of value added tax and port charges by the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government. The Israeli Government should enhance its cooperation with the Agency to maximize the benefits of donor contributions by ensuring the speedy delivery of UNRWA services.

20. Although the Palestinian refugee issue was a political one, the refugees' current problems were humanitarian, and the international community had a shared responsibility to address them. In view of the absence of any prospect of a turnaround in the rates of poverty and unemployment in the near future, certain elements of the Agency's emergency interventions should continue in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Working Group commended the Commissioner-General and the staff of UNRWA for the efforts to maintain the Agency's basic operations, despite resource constraints and access problems on the ground, and to provide the minimum services necessary to enable the refugees to lead productive lives. Any further reduction in those services would not only unfairly deprive the refugees of the level of support to which they were entitled, but could also have a destabilizing effect on the entire region. The Agency played a role vital to stability and security in the region.

21. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that the plight of the Palestinian refugees, whose number exceeded four million, would continue to be of paramount importance to the international community until their natural right to return to their homes and properties was recognized. Their situation remained as critical as it had been 57 years earlier and it had been exacerbated by decades spent by many in abject poverty, in refugee camps and in the diaspora while they awaited the realization of their right to return under General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The situation of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced in 1967 also continued to be difficult. Their right to return had been affirmed in Security Council resolution 237 (1967) and should have been realized years earlier. Those rights remained unfulfilled because of Israel's failure to comply. The relevant fundamental principles of international law must be respected. Palestinian refugees had an inalienable right to return, like all other refugees in the world, past and present. The individual right to private ownership, including ownership of land, was also important. According to the United Nations Conciliation Commission of Palestine, Palestinian refugees owned 5.5 million dunums of land. That ownership should be recognized by Israel and restored, or, if the owners accepted, should serve as a basis for compensation as part of any settlement of the refugee problem.

22. Israel's intransigence had for decades obstructed the resolution of the crisis. It had failed to acknowledge responsibility for the plight of the refugees and remained locked in positions contrary to

international law. The situation of the refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory was dismal, characterized by high unemployment, extreme poverty, overcrowded shelters and inadequate infrastructure. Their suffering was compounded by excessive and indiscriminate violence and systematic violations of human rights committed by the occupying forces. Israel's repeated sieges and assaults against civilian areas, including the camps, caused extreme anguish among the refugees and resulted in their forced displacement and further dispossession. The Israeli occupying forces targeted and terrorized the camps, particularly in Rafah and Jabaliya. In addition to unwarranted deaths and destruction, those brutal acts exacerbated the dire socio-economic condition of the refugee population. They were contrary to the basic rules and principles of international law, particularly article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Moreover, they had made the work of UNRWA more difficult, increasing the need for essential services, undermining the Agency's ability to deliver aid and exposing its staff and facilities to serious risks. The continued restrictions imposed by Israel on the freedom of movement of Palestinian persons and goods placed a great strain on the refugees, severely hampering their access to work, schools, health care, food and clean water. Israel's unlawful construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, had caused additional hardship, further isolating and impoverishing hundreds of refugee families. As a result, emergency aid had been necessary, particularly for the special hardship cases which comprised 5.8 per cent of the registered refugee population.

23. The dismantling of illegal Israeli settlements and the withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank had been an important step towards reversing Israel's colonization of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. However, the Israeli disengagement, which had been unilaterally planned and implemented, had failed to recognize Palestinian concerns and had left many critical issues unresolved. According to an assessment by the Commissioner-General earlier in the year, if borders opened, if overseas links could be created and if enterprise was allowed to flourish, the disengagement could make a real difference to Palestinian lives; if not, the humanitarian situation would remain depressingly bleak. Accordingly, the Palestinian leadership hoped that the disengagement would provide constructive momentum that would help to improve the socio-economic condition of the refugees in Gaza. To that end, Israel should resolve all the remaining issues, inter alia, by lifting the severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinian persons and goods, removing the strangulating military sieges and closures, and ceasing its construction of the wall. Israel should heed the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 9 July 2004. Israel's disengagement had not changed Gaza's legal status as an occupied territory nor had it modified the Agency's mandate to provide aid and assistance to the refugee population.

24. The international community's continued financial support of UNRWA was as vital as its continued political support. The refugees often feared that the Agency's financial difficulties indicated that the international community's commitment to the refugee issue was waning. The Agency was pursuing innovative ways of raising funds, focusing, inter alia, on Arab donors, particularly those located in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and on the establishment of independent country support groups. Increased financial assistance to UNRWA would contribute to its sustainability and effectiveness. The expansion of the Advisory Commission would contribute significantly to the promotion of the Agency's work, and he thanked the delegation of Sweden, which had facilitated consultations in New York on that matter. Finally, he expressed appreciation for the cooperation of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic with UNRWA, and for their efforts to facilitate the Agency's work.

25. **Mr. Al Manei** (United Arab Emirates) said that in the 58 years since the Palestinian question had arisen, the sufferings of the Palestinian population had continuously increased. When work had begun on construction of the separation wall, thousands of additional acres of Palestinian lands, natural resources and water had been destroyed and thousands more Palestinians had been displaced. The humanitarian crisis among the Palestinians had worsened and the rates of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy among the Palestinian refugees had increased. The ongoing construction of the wall inside the West Bank had isolated and impoverished those living in the adjacent areas, especially in the area between the wall and the 1949 truce line. The presence of the wall had also

impeded the efforts of UNRWA, particularly efforts to provide emergency humanitarian services to those affected.

26. The extreme conditions of deprivation and unemployment prevailing in some refugee camps as a result of the imposition of certain local laws were cause for concern. The Agency had insufficient funds, that had had an adverse impact on its infrastructure and its ability to implement its development programmes and plans, as well as on the quality of its service programmes such as the emergency assistance programmes for the Palestinian refugee camps. States and donor financial institutions such as the World Bank should double their contributions to UNRWA and increase their efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian refugees inside and outside the occupied territories.

27. The problem of the Palestinian refugees was an integral part of the question of Palestine and must be solved within the framework of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution of that question and of the situation in the Middle East. The refugees must be repatriated and compensated for their financial and moral losses in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, especially resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III). The responsibility for finding a solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees continued to devolve on the international community.

28. **Mr. Hassan** (Jordan) said that UNRWA should continue to operate in the region until a final solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees was agreed upon between all the parties concerned and was fully implemented. For many years, the Agency had proved vital to the Palestinian refugees and the host countries, and all donor countries should continue to contribute to its budget. Jordan hosted approximately 1.8 million Palestinian refugees, or over 42 per cent of the total number and 90 per cent of those displaced in 1967. In 2005, Jordan had spent over $463 million on education, health, infrastructure, social welfare and security services to the refugees, in addition to improving living conditions in 13 refugee camps in Jordan. Despite its own budgetary and financial difficulties, Jordan had funded such activities since the beginning of the Palestinian refugee problem in 1948 and had made up for decreases in UNRWA services caused by the Agency's budgetary deficit. In the biennium 2004-2005, UNRWA had spent $76.1 million on operations in Jordan and the Jordanian Government had spent $463.5 million on refugee services. The Palestinian problem should be resolved on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and the Arab Peace Initiative, with full guarantees for the rights of the refugees and the host countries. Furthermore, any agreed solution should comply with article 8 on the resolution of the problem of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons under international law of the Peace Treaty signed between Israel and Jordan. The Palestinian refugees should not be categorized on the basis of the geographical location where they were being hosted or on the basis of their living conditions. Israel should facilitate the operations of UNRWA by not impeding the work of its staff in the occupied Palestinian territory. His delegation supported the expansion of the Advisory Commission in such a way that it would help to support the work of the Agency.

29. **Mr. Ali Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that there was still no glimmer of hope for an approaching end to the long-standing tragedy of the Palestinian people through full restitution of their legitimate rights, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land. For over half a century, the international community had been a bystander to the circle of violence and oppression, thus encouraging Israel's continuation of its brutal policies against Palestinians and exacerbating the situation of Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories, as amply illustrated in the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/60/13). Israel was impervious to the calls for it to comply with international humanitarian law in the knowledge that it was immune to any United Nations resolution adopted. The continued construction of the separation wall against the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice also increased the suffering of those refugees living next to it and created new obstacles to the delivery of essential UNRWA services. In blatant violation of its legal commitments under international law, Israel had further extended its brutal practices to include the injuring and killing of UNRWA students, as detailed in the report, together with incidents in which UNRWA staff and vehicles were subjected to delay, denial of passage or worse at checkpoints in the West Bank. His country was a host to Palestinian refugees, who received various forms of support at great cost to his Government and were treated identically with Syrians. It had therefore been pleased to note the references in the report to its

ongoing cooperation and coordination with UNRWA, to which it had always lent support and assistance.

30. The plight of the Palestinian refugees was an international responsibility. UNRWA should therefore continue to perform its work and also to pursue its efforts to expand its donor base with a view to improving the situation of the refugees and enabling them to realize their inalienable rights. In addition, its services should be enhanced and delivered to its five fields of operation without interruption. The international community should respond to the Agency's emergency appeals for support, since neither the Palestinian refugee community nor the host countries should be financially burdened by the deficit in the Agency's budget. He hoped that UNRWA staff would receive the same hazard pay as other United Nations personnel, bearing in mind that some had lost their lives after being targeted by occupation forces.

31. It was now 57 years since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which had been constantly underscored by subsequent resolutions, in addition to further resolutions that inextricably linked the inalienable rights of the Palestinian refugees with the right to self-determination. Israel had proved without doubt, through its aggressive and provocative behaviour, including the use of brute military force against Palestinians and UNRWA facilities, that it was still not ready for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace that would guarantee the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes. It was time that the international community exerted pressure on Israel to end its occupation of Arab territories and obliged it to comply with United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

32. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) commended UNRWA for the vital role it continued to play in preserving the stability of the region under difficult and often dangerous circumstances. The Gaza disengagement had raised expectations of an improvement in the quality of life of the Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank and the donor community was mobilizing resources to respond to the high rates of poverty and unemployment.

33. She urged fellow donors to contribute to the Agency's general budget and to respond to emergency appeals so that it would have the resources to carry out its mandate. Scarce resources must, however, be used efficiently, that required transparency and dialogue between the Agency and the host authorities regarding priorities. She therefore supported the revitalization and expansion of the Advisory Commission and widened participation in host and donor meetings.

34. She expressed concern that the cost of humanitarian assistance had risen sharply owing to port and related charges imposed on imports through Israel. Costs had also increased as a result of closures by the Israeli defence forces and the construction of the wall, which separated Palestinians from schools, places of work and services. She called upon the Israeli Government to facilitate the speedy delivery of all UNRWA services.

35. **Mr. La Rosa Domínguez** (Cuba) welcomed the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/60/13), which described the excellent work done by the Agency in difficult conditions that were often attributable to the hostile attitude of the Israeli Government, as evidenced by the latter's harassment of the Agency's operations, including the detentions of its staff.

36. His delegation opposed the elimination of any of the bodies created to promote the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It would also be unacceptable to call for the elimination of UNRWA. The cost of such bodies was a small price to pay for the duty of the organization and the international community to assist the long-suffering and heroic Palestinian people in their quest for statehood.

37. The international community should not be deluded into thinking that Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip signalled the beginning of a definitive solution to the Palestine problem. Israel continued to control the land, sea and air borders, and many thorny problems, including that of the refugees, remained unsolved. Furthermore, Israel was continuing the construction of its illegal separation wall, depriving Palestinians of freedom of movement, access to basic services, lands and water; it was a de facto annexation of nearly 60 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in violation of General Assembly resolution 15 adopted at the tenth emergency special session. A just and lasting peace in the Middle East remained a pipe dream.

38. He commended UNRWA for ending the year 2004 with a budget surplus, but expressed concern that the current year might close with a deficit. He

commended countries and institutions which had supported UNRWA in its work of providing assistance to the Palestine refugees, including the most vulnerable, and supported the Agency's request for increased resources to meet the growing demand for its services. In spite of the economic blockade imposed on Cuba by the Government of the United States, his Government had provided free bursaries to more than 350 young Palestinians, more than 300 of whom had received university degrees.

39. He reiterated his delegation's support for the work of UNRWA in assisting the population and for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. He also called for the unconditional return of all Arab territories occupied by Israel and reaffirmed that all Israeli settlements established in the occupied Arab territories since 1967 were illegal. His delegation hoped for a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the Middle East.

40. **Mr. Kabtani** (Tunisia) said that, as exemplified in the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/60/13), the Palestinian refugees continued to suffer grim living conditions, including closures, destruction of property and restrictions on their mobility, and were caught in an endless cycle of violence at the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities. The end result was an economic and humanitarian disaster of proportions beyond the Agency's capacities that consequently demanded urgent international intervention. He was concerned about the adverse impact of dwindling resources on the delivery of UNRWA services and appealed to donor States to increase their contributions to the Agency's budget. He hoped that the generosity of such contributions would form the yardstick for enlargement of the membership of its Advisory Commission. He had also hoped that the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip would alleviate the restrictions imposed on Palestinian refugees, particularly concerning the movement of persons and goods, and consequently alleviate the burdens on UNRWA. The news of the currently escalating violence in the occupied Palestinian territories was therefore highly regrettable and distressing.

41. He expressed his appreciation to the countries hosting Palestinian refugees, in particular the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Jordan. Tunisia had consistently supported UNRWA, both politically and financially, and he wished to stress that any just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question would have to take into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes or be paid compensation in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

42. **Mr. Hamadah** (Kuwait) said that UNRWA should continue to operate until the important question of the Palestinian refugees was resolved in accordance with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Despite its financial difficulties, he hoped that UNRWA would continue to deliver its services to the refugees. In that connection, he commended its efforts to broaden the base of donors to its budget. In particular, the Agency should perform its tasks without distinction among any of its five operational areas, where its educational, health and social reform programmes were to be applauded. For its part, Kuwait remained fully committed to making its annual voluntary contribution of US$ 1.5 million to the Agency's regular budget.

43. Israel justified its repressive practices against the Palestinian people, which had continued relentlessly since September 2000, on the grounds that it was protecting its national security and ending violent activities. On the contrary, however, its policies had resulted in an escalation of violence and a further decline in the living conditions of the Palestinians. It was extremely disturbing that the Israeli authorities should constantly obstruct the Agency's humanitarian work, in violation of international agreements which it should instead respect. The Israeli army's destruction of shelters for Palestinian refugees and facilities run by UNRWA was no less regrettable than its deliberate and illegal detention of UNRWA staff. Praising the dedication of UNRWA staff in their work in such difficult conditions, he said that they should enjoy the same privileges as United Nations staff working in the region. He expressed full solidarity with the Palestinian people and supported their legitimate efforts to obtain all of their rights under the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, while welcome, should be regarded only as a first step towards full withdrawal from all the territories occupied in 1967. To that end, he called on the Israeli Government to comply with the terms of reference on which the peace process was based and to implement the Road Map and agreements concluded

with the Palestinian Authority in the context of that process.

44. **Mr. Semadeni** (Switzerland) said that the examination results achieved by refugee students, the health standards in the communities, and the programmes' contribution to the local economy testified to the success of the UNRWA education, health, and relief and social services programmes in the Agency's five areas of operation. The host countries provided invaluable support to the refugees, and he welcomed the renewed dialogue and measures taken in Lebanon to improve the dire socio-economic situation of the refugees living in that country. The international community should call on Israel to comply with international humanitarian law and at all times facilitate access to humanitarian services by the Palestinian population, including UNRWA-registered refugees. A joint study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme and UNRWA had shown that 1.4 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza did not have food security, and that the number of vulnerable households headed by women had significantly increased. He hoped for sustained improvement in the overall security situation and for an upturn in the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, that would enable the Agency to wind down its emergency operations in favour of its main programmes.

45. In June 2004 a major conference had been held in Geneva on "Meeting the Needs of Palestine Refugees in the Near East: Building Partnership in Support of UNRWA", and the stakeholders were duly implementing its key recommendations. Switzerland attached particular importance to proposals for the expansion of the membership of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, the collection of a comprehensive set of data in order to develop needs-based service provision, the development of a strategic framework aimed at further enhancing the Agency's programme-management capacity, and the development of synergies within the global humanitarian community.

46. **Mr. Hulan** (Canada) said that UNRWA was carrying out critically important work, and her Government had pledged its continuing support for the Agency's endeavours.

47. Israel's recent withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank had created new opportunities to improve the lives of the Palestinian people and return to the Road Map. Much effort was needed to maximize such opportunities, and her Government had made a commitment to increase its involvement and support to the Palestinian Authority during the forthcoming crucial period.

48. The humanitarian relief and essential services provided by UNRWA to the Palestinians remained vitally important. In September, her Government had announced a contribution of $6 million to support the Agency's job creation and microcredit lending initiatives in Gaza, that was in addition to the $10 million contributed to its core budget. There was currently an opportunity for a new level of partnership between the Agency and the Palestinian Authority in the planning and programming of services, and her Government would help to promote that partnership if requested.

49. Humanitarian assistance could be delivered only if access routes were open, and her Government was working closely with its Palestinian, Israeli and donor partners to ensure that people and goods were able to move in and out of Gaza, including to the West Bank.

50. The reform process initiated within UNRWA should contribute to the welfare of the Palestinian refugees and achieve greater accountability. Reform efforts would play a crucial role in maintaining donor support.

51. **Mr. Adel** (Egypt) said that Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and settlements in the northern West Bank had produced no improvement in the situation of Palestinian refugees, whose hopes of a safe return to their homes had been dashed by Israel's procrastination in withdrawing from the remaining occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in accordance with the Road Map. The difficulty of the situation was further exacerbated by the shortage of funds available to UNRWA, which was nevertheless working tirelessly to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian people. He highlighted the severe and sustained mobility and other restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, which had repercussions on their daily life and on UNRWA operations, as clearly depicted in the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/60/13). In particular, UNRWA staff were repeatedly obstructed in their work, not least where the

delivery of humanitarian assistance was concerned. During the period covered by the report, the humanitarian, political, economic and social situation of the Palestinian people had deteriorated significantly. In that connection, the impact of Israel's continued construction of the separation wall had been particularly adverse and it was therefore imperative that Israel should comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the subject.

52. Despite low funding, UNRWA had nevertheless managed to continue to provide assistance in the fields of education, health and relief and social services, as well as through its microfinance and microenterprise programme. The work involved in tackling the problems of Palestinian refugees should be duly prioritized, however, through increased donor contributions and a better international response to appeals for emergency assistance. In that connection, he welcomed the efforts under way to include donor States as members of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA and hoped that funding would consequently improve. Lastly, he asserted that it would be impossible to deal with the worsening humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories without effectively addressing the issue of the Israeli occupation and attendant practices in the context of international and regional efforts to move beyond the current impasse in the peace process with a view to achieving a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.

53. **Mr. Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) drew attention to the growing difficulties encountered by Palestinian Christians, a tiny group of people who constituted less than 2 per cent of the local Palestinian population. They were sometimes viewed with suspicion by their neighbours and consequently suffered doubly from discrimination and marginalization. Recently Christians had been exposed to intolerable acts of religious extremism in the area around Bethlehem, and he hoped that local leaders would find ways of addressing the needs of all members of local communities targeted by violence.

54. The security wall was having adverse effects in terms of the access of some Palestinians to their land and water sources, customary amenities and places of worship. While the Holy See acknowledged the right of all peoples to live in security, it considered that the Holy Land was in greater need of bridges than of walls. He hoped that problems would be resolved by negotiation and dialogue.

55. A lasting solution to the problems of the region must cover the question of the Holy City of Jerusalem. In the light of current circumstances, the Holy See renewed its support for internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the Holy Places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2 adopted at the tenth emergency special session.

Agenda item 116: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (continued) (A/C.4/60/WP.1 and A/C.4/60/WP.2)

56. **Mr. Eliasson** (President of the General Assembly) welcomed the opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved by the Committee with regard to the revitalization of its work and, in that context, welcomed the proposals contained in the non-paper approved by the Committee (A/C.4/60/WP.2), in particular the use of question and answer sessions and interactive dialogues. He stressed the need to be innovative in promoting real dialogue and to explore different methods and formats in order to make discussions within the Organization more lively, engaging and relevant to outside realities.

57. He welcomed the Committee's thoughts regarding the allocation of agenda items. He had encouraged all Committee Chairmen to make an analysis of what criteria should apply in the allocation of an agenda item to the plenary Assembly or to a committee; that was an important topic and there should be greater transparency. Some issues should be discussed in both the plenary Assembly and a Committee; one example was the need to promote a culture of prevention throughout the Organization, an important aspect of which was the need to be proactive in preventing conflicts and promoting security and development.

58. The Committee's efforts should be seen in the broader context of the revitalization of the General Assembly, to which he was particularly attached. The previous day he had drafted a letter drawing attention to the decision in General Assembly resolution 59/313, paragraph 4, to establish an ad hoc working group to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly.

That tool should be used to move the revitalization agenda forward on matters such as the allocation of items and the streamlining of resolutions. Thematic debates could likewise be a worthwhile tool to achieve progress on various topics, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals, such as health, in both the plenary Assembly and a committee.

59. The best way to revitalize the General Assembly was to ensure follow-up to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which, while not perfect, was a good starting point. He looked forward to progress with regard to the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and a comprehensive convention on international terrorism and on issues related to development, a more effective Economic and Social Council, and management reform. The year 2006 must be a year of implementation, when words would be translated into action. Member States could count on his support in such efforts.

60. **Ms. Cousins** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and in addition, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine said that the European Union strongly supported efforts to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly in line with the principles and objectives outlined in the Summit Outcome and General Assembly resolution 59/233. The efforts of the previous two Presidents of the General Assembly were commendable but progress so far had been disappointing. It was important that the General Assembly should continue with its efforts, inter alia through the ad hoc working group. The European Union was committed to participating fully in the Committee's discussions on the revitalization of its work and the improvement of its working methods.

61. **Ms. Anguiano Rodriguez** (Mexico) said that her delegation attached great importance to the work of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, not only for its role in the ongoing decolonization process, but also as an ideal forum for consideration of items of a political nature. Greater use must be made of the Committee's potential with regard to the latter. She therefore supported efforts aimed at the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, including the Main Committees, in particular with regard to the Fourth Committee as expressed in the non-paper approved by the Committee on 11 March 2005 (A/C.4/60/WP.2). Some of the decisions regarding the Committee's working methods, in particular those which did not require the approval of the General Assembly, had already been implemented, although it was too early to know if they had had a positive effect.

62. The Committee's suggestions relating to the allocation of agenda items had not been reflected in General Assembly resolution 59/313, partly because there had not been an opportunity for Member States to discuss the proposed reforms, including proposals from the Main Committees in informal consultations. Her delegation remained convinced that one way to rationalize the work of the General Assembly was to ensure a better allocation of agenda items between the plenary Assembly and the Committees. Revitalization was a continuous process which required the participation of the plenary Assembly as well as the Main Committees. Papers such as the one submitted by the Fourth Committee (A/C.4/60/WP.2) were an integral part of that process. Her delegation was confident that the ad hoc working group open to all Member States to be established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 59/313, would take into account the views of the Main Committees, in particular those which required the approval of the plenary Assembly for implementation.

63. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to two documents issued under agenda item 116: draft provisional guidelines on approximate dates for the consideration of items by the Fourth Committee at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly (A/C.4/60/WP.1) and the non-paper approved by the Committee on 11 March 2005 on revitalization of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/C.4/60/WP.2). The Bureau was of the opinion that those two documents would be useful to the ad hoc working group to be established pursuant to paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 59/313 in its discussion of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, and in particular with regard to the working methods of the Fourth Committee. It therefore recommended that the two documents should be annexed to the report of the Committee on agenda item 116. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed with that recommendation.

64. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/60/SR.21

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Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 2 November 2005, at 2.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan)

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05-58349 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 2.40 p.m.

Agenda item 30: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/60/13 and Add.1, A/60/212, A/60/256, A/60/277 and A/60/439)

1. **Mr. Gidor** (Israel) said that it was in the interests of all, in particular the donors to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that the Agency should maintain neutrality and impartiality. His Government was disappointed that the Agency's report failed to mention the context in which UNRWA activities were carried out, namely Israel's perennial need to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks. During the current round of its war on terrorism, which had begun in October 2000, over 1,000 Israeli citizens had been killed. During the period covered by the report Israel had endured some 2,000 separate incidents of terrorism. That situation had been described by UNRWA as one of severe strife, whereas in reality his country had been subjected to a savage onslaught that had necessitated a military response. By omitting the context, the report failed to present the relevant relationship between cause and effect.

2. Since 1967, his Government had undertaken to facilitate the task of the Agency, subject only to regulations or arrangements necessitated by military security. Limitations had to be placed occasionally on the movement of goods and individuals in order to prevent infiltration and security infringements. That circumstance, too, had been omitted from the report.

3. Israel supported the humanitarian mandate of UNRWA, and continued to attach great significance to its activities. The Agency's dialogue with the Israeli authorities had improved and he welcomed its more constructive approach to Israel's concerns. At every level, Israeli officials were available to meet and cooperate with their counterparts on issues related to UNRWA operations. His Government had daily arranged for UNRWA vehicles, goods and personnel to travel through border crossings, despite repeated attacks directed against Israeli personnel working at the crossings.

4. Palestinian terrorist organizations were determined to sabotage any progress towards peace in the region. Hamas had abandoned any restraint, and had directly caused the deaths of many Palestinians, both by launching attacks from densely populated areas thus exposing them to counter-attack, as in the case of an UNRWA school, and by keeping dangerous munitions in civilian areas. UNRWA must ensure that its installations were not used for such purposes. The Palestinian leadership had failed to react in any way to those problems.

5. Assistance to the Palestinian people was an important part of his Government's policy, as economic growth and the improved welfare of the Palestinian population was integral to the stability of the region. Both the Palestinian and the Israeli people had the right to self-determination, and deserved to live in security and peace. The suffering of both peoples was a humanitarian issue. Israel hoped that its neighbours would enjoy adequate living conditions. The Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip had provided the Palestinians with an opportunity to build a better future for themselves.

6. **Mr. Kader Mohideen** (India) said that his delegation shared the international community's concern over the endless cycle of violence and counter-violence that characterized the current phase of the conflict in the Middle East. The economies of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority had suffered. In Palestine, increased poverty and unemployment, coupled with the decreasing revenues of the Palestinian Authority, had brought the economy to the verge of collapse. The construction of the separation wall by Israel in the territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, had exacerbated a deteriorating humanitarian situation. The international community was most concerned about the wall's encroachment on Palestinian land and interests and the great hardships created for the people affected by its construction. Furthermore, there was a danger that continued construction of the wall might prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations between the parties.

7. India had called for the easing of the restrictions placed on the Palestinian areas and for action to defuse the mounting humanitarian crisis. In the past, it had manifested its support for the Palestinian people in their quest for nationhood through regular assistance and the supply of medicines to the Palestinian Authority. It had also made a regular, albeit modest, contribution to the UNRWA budget and in 2004 had doubled its contribution to the Agency's regular budget. The restrictions placed on the movement of UNRWA staff and the resulting limitations on the

Agency's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance were both matters for concern. Blockades should be lifted and the delivery of humanitarian supplies should not be hindered.

8. There were currently over 4 million Palestinian refugees in the region. Their primary source of humanitarian relief was UNRWA. In addition to the Agency's crucial role in addressing the humanitarian crisis, its activities were an important component in the struggle to achieve peace in the Middle East. It was imperative that the international community should continue to carry out its shared responsibility to support the Agency, and that the Quartet should work closely with the parties to encourage them to fulfil their obligations. All sides must work together to achieve the vision of two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

9. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan) said that his Government recognized that an opportunity currently existed to advance the Middle East process, and it had become actively engaged in that undertaking. Following the election of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas as President of the Palestinian Authority, his Government had extended an invitation to both Prime Minister Sharon and President Abbas, in an effort to build a bridge between the parties. Mr. Abbas had travelled to Japan in May and met the Prime Minister, who had expressed support for President Abbas's efforts for peace, and requested that he continue to take steps to control the extremists. On the same occasion, his Government had announced its intention to contribute an additional sum of approximately $100 million, half of which had already been provided to UNRWA and other United Nations organizations for emergency assistance.

10. Since 1993, Japan had contributed $500 million to the Palestinians through UNRWA. Its total assistance to the Palestinians since 1993 amounted to $760 million, approximately 10 per cent of which had been channelled through UNRWA. When the United Nations had launched its Consolidated Appeal Process for the occupied Palestinian territory in November 2004, his Government had decided to provide additional assistance of $60 million, of which one quarter was to be delivered through UNRWA. The aim was to support rehousing and the creation of employment in the Gaza Strip.

11. Japan was making contributions in the areas of education and vocational training in order to encourage self-reliance in the refugees and reinvigorate the economy, side by side with UNRWA capacity-building. His Government considered that assistance important from the human security perspective, which focused on protection and empowerment.

12. UNRWA continued to play a vital role in the region. As one of the major donors, Japan paid closer attention to the Agency's management of its budget and operations, and expected it to achieve transparency in its administration and to use its resources efficiently.

13. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) observed that, in view of the disturbing behaviour of the Israeli authorities and the vital contribution UNRWA was making to the survival of the Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories, the failure of the international community to remedy the Agency's severe underfunding was a matter of concern. Indeed, the UNRWA medium-term plan would require considerable additional extrabudgetary funding, because of the deepening humanitarian crisis and the depressed Palestinian economy. The international community must come to its assistance.

14. As the birthplace of microcredit, Bangladesh commended the Agency for the income-generating activities it had initiated, even in an economic climate of decline, under its microfinance and microenterprise programme. UNRWA had also done well to follow up on the 2004 Geneva conference and to begin implementing its recommendations. The Palestine Refugee Records Project should enable the needs of the refugees to be assessed more accurately, and the Agency's medium-term plan should help to identify priorities and chart long-term strategies, while its internal reforms should improve management practices.

15. His delegation urged the United Nations to make hazardous-duty payments to the thousands of UNRWA local staff, who were the only staff members in such a dangerous situation not receiving those payments.

16. The Commissioner-General and her entire staff were to be commended for their unwavering dedication and hard work in the face of continued adversity.

17. **Mr. Erçin** (Turkey) said that Turkey had welcomed Israel's unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank as a significant step towards a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Both parties should take advantage of the momentum thus created by doing

their part to achieve the two-State solution envisioned under the Quartet Road Map.

19. The situation remained fragile, however. Turkey unequivocally condemned in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism — such as the one that had claimed innocent lives in Israel the previous week — as well as any provocation and incitement to violence. It was equally critical of improper and harsh retaliatory measures. The region must not be allowed to fall victim to violence, misery and desperation once again at the current critical juncture. Both parties must act with the utmost restraint.

20. As the largest United Nations relief and human development agency in the region, UNRWA had been given the task of dealing with one of the most difficult aspects of the Middle East question: the over 4 million Palestinian refugees dispersed throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, for whom it was a lifeline. It was a tremendous undertaking to address their multifaceted needs.

21. The dire economic conditions that persisted, particularly in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, owing to Israeli closures and other restrictive measures, impeded not only the daily lives of the refugees but also the activities of the Agency, whose services needed to be provided on a steady basis. Security measures by Israel should in no way hinder access to humanitarian assistance. The Agency's efforts to coordinate activities with the Special Envoy for Disengagement of the Quartet should facilitate matters, but key issues pertaining to the Gaza Strip had yet to be settled by Israel with the parties involved.

22. The ongoing reform process within UNRWA aimed at devising new operational approaches was commendable. His delegation endorsed the recommendations in the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/60/439), and supported the proposed expansion of the Agency's Advisory Commission to include the leading donors.

23. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories had undoubtedly escalated as a result of the curfews, closures and other military operations carried out by the Israeli forces, which had also hampered the Agency's ability to perform its humanitarian work in support of Palestinian refugees. The separation wall in the West Bank, which had been deemed illegitimate in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, was causing similarly adverse repercussions, having created new obstacles to the delivery of essential UNRWA services to Palestinian refugee families, in particular those living between the wall and the Green Line. The Agency's humanitarian work was also further impeded by the punitive operations, like that latest imposed, which were inconsistent with international law and the agreements between UNRWA and the Government of Israel.

24. As indicated in the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/60/439), the funding gap for the Agency's regular budget had declined owing to a combination of exchange rate gains and increased contributions to some donors. The Agency had also successfully adopted innovative approaches towards overcoming the structural deficit in its budget. Bearing in mind that economic hardship and high unemployment rates remained a major problem in both Gaza and the West Bank, he expressed the hope that the Agency's 2005-2009 medium-term plan would enhance the economic potential of the refugees and address the unmet needs of the most vulnerable among them, in particular. He also hoped that the Agency would successfully attract more funding, especially from major donors, in order to address its financial situation and thereby improve the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees through its programme activities. The problem of the refugees was central to the protracted issue of the question of Palestine. Israel's long-standing occupation and General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had not yet been implemented. The Agency had continuously retained a vital and indispensable role as the provider of educational, training, health and relief services to Palestinian refugees. It would inevitably remain in that role until the problem of those refugees and the question of Palestine were settled in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and, in the case of Israel, in the interests of land for peace.

25. **Mr. Xie** Yanming (China) said that Israel and the UNRWA had been crucial in improving the situation of Palestinian refugees, including their economic development and livelihood, over the decades, and it had inherited a great deal. Indeed, it had become the symbol of the international community's commitment to the welfare of the Palestinian refugees, and its staff should be commended on their dedication and spirit of sacrifice in often difficult and dangerous conditions.

25. For many years, a shortage of funds had been one of the Agency's main problems and the quality of its services had suffered. His delegation hoped that the international community would honour its commitment to UNRWA and increase its financial contributions.

26. Since the beginning of 2005, the situation in the Middle East had eased. New leaders had been elected in Israel and the national and municipal elections in Palestine, and, in Sharm-el-Sheikh, representatives of both sides had concluded a ceasefire agreement, while Israel had completed its partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank ahead of schedule. Both sides should seize that unique opportunity to overcome difficulties, build mutual trust and return to the path outlined in the Road Map. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China had always promoted the peace process in the Middle East and engaged in mediation of various kinds. An early, complete and just solution to the Middle East problem was the common aspiration of the people of the region. It was also in the interests of world peace and stability.

27. **Mr. Noroozbaly** (Malaysia), referring to the statement by the Commissioner-General, which had presented a disheartening picture of the situation of the Palestine refugees, who were among the poorest and the most vulnerable as Israeli aggression had continued apace Israel to desist from destroying Palestinian homes and property and to ensure that the deteriorating humanitarian and socio-economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory were immediately reversed. The separation wall built by Israel and the accompanying restrictions that had been imposed had only aggravated conditions in the territory, denying the population access to employment and essential goods and services, and, moreover, impeding the freedom of movement of UNRWA staff. It urged continued to flout the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding the building of the wall. The difficulties would only worsen.

28. His delegation had only admiration for the resolute and effective response of UNRWA staff members to the continuing emergency humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, even as they laboured under extreme constraints. The deliberate killing of over 80 of the Agency's staff members during the reporting period was a matter of concern for it violated the integrity of the United Nations and the immunity and security of its humanitarian staff.

29. UNRWA was delivering effective emergency assistance to the refugees and reporting periodically to donor countries on how the programme was progressing. The steps taken to improve coordination in the response to emergency situations ought to produce the desired results. The Agency's cooperation with other United Nations agencies had improved the quality of life of Palestine refugees. The non-governmental organizations had also played a crucial role, in particular the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

30. Contributions to the regular budget of UNRWA should grow at a steady and predictable rate, and its emergency appeals for funds should be heeded if the Agency was to be able to respond adequately to the vital needs of the Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied Palestinian territory. The level of response had stagnated, however. Even though the wholesale destruction of homes by the occupying Power was contrary to international humanitarian law, it would be ironic if donors, to the detriment of the victims, stood on a position of principle that by funding the construction of new homes they would be complicit in those violations. By providing educational and health and social services to the refugees and improving their economic condition, UNRWA had done much to humanize the lives of the refugees and forestall a more alarming humanitarian disaster. Its activities were an essential component in the struggle for peace in the Middle East and were a tangible expression of the concern, sympathy and humanitarian commitment of the international community. The Agency must be given the collective support it needed to fulfil its essential mandate effectively until such time as the question of Palestine was resolved in its entirety.

31. **Mr. Nguyen Duy Chien** (Viet Nam) expressed high appreciation to UNRWA for its work over the past year in providing educational, health and social services and microcredit assistance to Palestine refugees. The Agency had also maintained or strengthened its cooperation with a number of other United Nations programmes and organizations. The Agency was, indeed, the symbol of the international community's commitment to the well-being of the Palestine refugees until a just and durable settlement of the refugee problem was achieved.

32. The Agency's activities had, however, been seriously affected by the instability and violence in the

region, and especially by Israeli military operations, which involved internal and external curfews and closures. UNRWA had been hampered in its humanitarian work because of the restrictions on the freedom of movement of its personnel and vehicles, that in turn had severely affected the daily lives of the refugees, who had lost access to income and essential goods and services. The detention of UNRWA staff in violation of the privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel was a matter of particular concern.

34. **Ms. Brooker** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and, in addition, the Republic of Moldova, commended the staff and management of UNRWA for fulfilling their duties in difficult and often very dangerous circumstances. She also expressed appreciation to the Governments of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria for having provided assistance to Palestinian refugees for more than five decades. With contributions of over €200 million in 2005 from the European Commission and member States, the European Union, the largest contributor to UNRWA, had provided more than half of the Agency's revenues and it planned to increase its support to Palestinian refugees throughout the region. It was important to revitalize the Advisory Commission.

35. The European Union was deeply concerned about the continuing humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory and called on the Israeli Government to cease demolitions and to take urgent action to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians in line with international law and Security Council resolution 1544 (2004). The situation of Palestinian refugee children was particularly alarming and the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority should give children special protection and implement their obligations in that regard. The Israeli Government should avoid all action that aggravated the humanitarian and economic plight of the Palestinian people and take immediate measures under the Road Map to improve the security, humanitarian and economic conditions of the Palestinian people. The situation on the ground had hampered the capability of all humanitarian operators, including UNRWA and other United Nations agencies, to provide essential services. The Government of Israel should ensure full and secure access for diplomatic and humanitarian personnel and goods as required by international humanitarian law and the Road Map. The kidnapping of international and Palestinian aid workers was a matter of concern. The Palestinian Authority should ensure the safety of all foreign aid workers in Palestine.

36. The Agency's services to the refugees constituted an essential investment. UNRWA had developed a microfinance and microenterprise programme and a range of infrastructure projects to improve the living conditions of the refugees. Its medium-term plan focused on areas that were crucial to stability and mapped out its priorities. The Agency's relief and social services programme addressed the needs of the most vulnerable among the refugee population. In view of the financing gap in the UNRWA emergency programmes, the Commissioner-General's efforts to enlarge the donor community were appropriate. Future European Union assistance to the Palestinian Authority would reflect the priorities set out in its three-year medium-term development plan.

37. Israel's disengagement had been a significant step towards implementing the Road Map. The outstanding issues should be resolved, in particular those relating to the economic viability of Gaza. It was important to reach agreement on access to Gaza for people and goods through land borders, a port and an airport. The European Union condemned acts of violence perpetrated by Palestinian militants and encouraged the Palestinian Authority to continue to take action against those responsible and to take steps to control security in the Gaza Strip. Israel was entitled to protect its citizens against terrorist attacks, but it should act with restraint and refrain from extrajudicial killings, which were contrary to international law. It should also reverse its settlement policy and freeze all settlement activity, dismantle outposts erected since March 2001 and end the confiscation of land and the construction of the separation barrier, all of which threatened to render the two-State solution impossible to implement. The building of settlements and the construction of the separation barrier in and around East Jerusalem jeopardized a final status agreement on Jerusalem.

38. The European Union was committed to a negotiated two-State solution agreed between the parties, that would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing

side by side with Israel in peace and security. It would not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed upon between the parties, and it reaffirmed that the Road Map, as endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003), was the fundamental framework for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Until that conflict was resolved, the services provided by UNRWA would remain essential.

38. **Mr. Al-Qahtani** (Qatar) said that UNRWA should continue to provide essential humanitarian services to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian refugees until such time as their situation was justly resolved in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The difficulties and hardships which had an adverse affect on the Agency's ability to deliver those services were copiously illustrated in the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/60/13). Previous speakers had already spoken at length about the worsening humanitarian crisis and the effect of Israeli violations and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. He reaffirmed his country's support for UNRWA staff in responding to the emergency humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees and said that the Government of Israel should fully respect the immunities and privileges of UNRWA as a United Nations agency, as well as its own agreement with UNRWA. He also expressed his appreciation to those countries which were hosting Palestinian refugee camps, namely Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon.

39. There should be a constant and predictable increase in the contributions to the Agency's regular budget; that was vital in order to ensure the care of refugees in its areas of operation. Moreover, every effort should be made by donor States, in particular, to step up their contributions to the emergency programmes run by the Agency, which should also seek new options for broadening its donor base. For its part, Qatar would continue to support the Agency's regular budget and to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people in general. It also maintained its firmly held view concerning the legal basis for the settlement of the issue of the Palestinian refugees, namely the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which would prepare the way for the establishment of peace and stability in the region.

40. **Ms. Seeley** (United States of America) said that, through its substantial financial contributions to UNRWA, the United States had demonstrated its enduring support for providing humanitarian relief to Palestinian refugees. The United States was the largest single contributor to UNRWA after the European Union. The Agency's humanitarian assistance was a stabilizing force in the region, and other countries, especially those in the region, should increase their contributions to its core budget. UNRWA had a key role to play in supporting economic recovery and development in Gaza and the West Bank.

41. The United States welcomed the high-level international conference held in Geneva in 2004 that had reviewed the Agency's operations. It also commended UNRWA for having consigned the Working Group on Stakeholder Relations to examine ways of improving communication among the Agency, the States hosting refugees and donors. It supported the expansion of the Advisory Commission proposed by Sweden. The enlarged Advisory Commission could advise the Commissioner-General and her staff on matters related to the budget, special projects, fund-raising and accountability. The Fourth Committee should continue to streamline resolutions related to the financial requirements of UNRWA and the needs of the Palestinian refugees, and the General Assembly should expedite the clustering of items, biennializing and triennializing them where possible. Her delegation believed that it was unnecessary to adopt additional resolutions on UNRWA at the present juncture.

42. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) commended the staff of UNRWA for their devoted and valuable work in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. The humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory was mounting as a result of the military operations waged by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people and the severe and sustained restrictions and curfews imposed on Palestinian cities and villages. The serious impact of such practices on the Palestinian economy was exacerbated by the widespread destruction of infrastructure and public and private buildings and by the imposition of harsher closures. In total disregard of its obligations under international humanitarian law, the privileges and immunities of UNRWA as an organ of the United Nations and a bilateral agreement with UNRWA to facilitate the Agency's operations at all times, Israel

continued to restrict the movement of UNRWA personnel, vehicles and goods, thereby impeding the Agency's provision of services and humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. He urged the international community to exert pressure on the Israeli Government to lift those restrictions in order to enable UNRWA to implement its emergency relief and regular programmes.

43. Since September 2000, Israel had been ruthlessly and unlawfully destroying homes and refugee shelters in the occupied Palestinian territory, rendering thousands of people homeless. To assist the Palestinian people in rebuilding what Israel had destroyed, Saudi Arabia had, earlier in 2005, announced a $20 million donation for the construction of over 700 new homes in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, while a $27 million donation from the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society had enabled UNRWA to undertake reconstruction in the Jenin refugee camp, which had been razed to the ground in 2002, despite frequent incursions, curfews, closures and the killing of the project's manager by Israeli forces.

44. In defiance of the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 9 July 2004 and General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004, Israel continued to build the apartheid wall in the West Bank and in and around East Jerusalem. According to UNRWA, the wall had led to the further impoverishment and isolation of refugee families and created new obstacles to the delivery of essential UNRWA services to the refugees, who were cut off from agricultural land, places of work, and health, educational and other service centres.

45. According to the UNRWA Emergency Appeal 2005 Special Report, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza would probably have little immediate impact on local socio-economic conditions and the majority of the population would continue to need substantial external assistance. Yet the response of the international community to the Agency's appeals for funds for emergency programmes had gradually decreased. It was therefore necessary for the international community to contribute generously to the Agency's budget and emergency relief programmes. The Agency had been able to continue its operations over the past five decades mainly because of the generous assistance of the donor countries and the support provided by the host countries, namely Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Palestinian Authority. It was incumbent upon the international community to exert efforts to revive the peace process and to compel Israel to return to the negotiating table. Until such time as the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories came to an end and the refugee problem was solved in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the responsibility of UNRWA towards the Palestinian refugees should continue.

46. **Ms. Shawwa** (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) thanked the members of the Committee for supporting UNRWA and pointed out that, while the Arab States did not contribute much to the Agency's budget, they made substantial donations to its projects and provided about 25 per cent of the resources of the emergency fund.

47. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement by the representative of Israel had been full of distortions. Blaming the victims, themselves, UNRWA and Palestinian terrorists, his statement seemed to be aimed at absolving Israel of all responsibility for the plight of Palestinian refugees. It was indicative of Israel's denial of the humanitarian, historical, legal and political dimensions of the problem. The danger of such arguments lay in Israel's refusal to acknowledge its responsibility. That acknowledgement was the starting point for any solution to the refugee problem. Israel failed to recognize its moral, legal and financial responsibility in spite of an international consensus and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The enormity of the problem was due to Israeli intransigence. The facts on the ground were well known and described in the UNRWA report.

48. Moreover, referring to the representative of Israel's claim that Israel was no longer in Gaza, he pointed out, first, that not all refugees lived in Gaza and, second, that although Israel had dismantled the illegal settlements and left Gaza, the area was still an occupied territory. Israel had left it after 37 years of destruction and it would take a long time to rehabilitate and reconstruct it. Israel denied that Gaza was still under its responsibility and under occupation; it was however, part of the occupied Palestinian territory and the status of refugees in Gaza remained the same. Legally it made no difference whether Israeli tanks were inside the refugee camps or around them. The responsibility of Israel as the occupying Power

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Chairman:	Mr. Aliyev	(Azerbaijan)
later:	Ms. Anguiano Rodriguez (Vice-Chairman)	(Mexico)
later:	Mr. Aliyev	(Azerbaijan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 31: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/60/294-297 and A/60/365)

1. **Mr. Kariyawasam** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, introduced its report (A/60/365), which he said was based on first-hand accounts of conditions in the occupied territories by witnesses from the territories who had been interviewed in other countries in the region during the Special Committee's field trip. Given the recent trend towards dialogue and cooperation, Israel should reconsider its 37-year policy of denying members of the Special Committee access to the occupied territories.

2. Despite the recent positive political developments, the report gave a disturbing picture of continuing grave violations by Israel of the human rights of the Palestinian population under its occupation. The military occupation was no less harsh: the closures, the checkpoints, the confiscations of land and water resources and the demolition of houses continued unabated.

3. Indeed, the separation wall that Israel was building was not only impeding the Palestinians' freedom of movement, it was affecting their national identity and violating their legitimate claims to land and their rights to adequate housing, food, family life, education and health care. Because of the wall, Palestinians were losing control over key strategic resources such as water and energy. Normal access to health care had been cut off and the completion of the wall would allow only 39 per cent of Palestinians to reach health facilities, down from 87 per cent. Moreover, checkpoint delays at the wall indicated a deliberate pattern of hampering normal schooling, especially for university students. The restrictions on movement created rising unemployment and poverty that took the greatest toll on women and children, generating food insecurity and a decline in nutrition.

4. There were disturbing reports that as many as 8,500 Palestinians, including hundreds of women and minors, were detained in Israeli jails, where they were allegedly subjected to degrading and cruel treatment, including torture. Moreover, several hundreds more were being held indefinitely in administrative detention and it was made very difficult for their lawyers to meet with and represent their clients.

5. In the occupied Syrian Golan, half of the Israeli settlements were scheduled for expansion, and new settlers were being encouraged to move in. Syrian citizens in the Golan controlled only 20 per cent of the water supply. Landmines laid close to villages and fields were a constant danger, and an Israeli nuclear waste site near the Syrian border posed an ecological threat.

6. As the human rights situation deteriorated and the misery of the Palestinian population deepened, it was essential for Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take all possible actions to build confidence among and across communities, with the two-State solution as their goal. At the same time, it was essential that all forms of organized violence, terrorism, intimidation and harassment by either side in the occupied Palestinian territories should be halted.

7. The recommendations in the report were similar to those of the previous year, but the General Assembly must find innovative ways to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories. It must renew the Special Committee's mandate in keeping with current realities and with the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

8. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine), endorsed the report of the Special Committee and drew attention also to the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 (A/60/271), which corroborated the Special Committee's findings. Throughout the Israeli occupation, the national existence of the Palestinian people had been threatened and their collective and individual human rights had been systematically violated. A number of provisions of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, had been applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory from the outset: the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

9. In the past five years, the human rights violations had increased dramatically in scale and intensity.

resulting in the death of over 3,750 Palestinians and the wounding of more than 40,000. Even more troubling was the culture of absolute impunity demonstrated by the occupying Power, which, according to reliable reports, had investigated fewer than 5 per cent of the deaths of unarmed Palestinian civilians at the hands of its military forces. At the same time, violence by illegal armed Israeli settlers had increased significantly. Those crimes also continued to go unpunished under the occupying Power's undeclared policy of leniency towards them, which had encouraged further attacks.

10. Each day, moreover, every Palestinian was subject to systematic humiliation by the occupying Power. For example, the restrictions on movement at the more than 600 checkpoints placed throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had resulted in skyrocketing levels of poverty and unemployment, exacerbating the already dire economic and social conditions where food insecurity was already the harsh reality for 40 per cent of the population. Checkpoint delays continued to hamper or preclude access to jobs, schools, health care, holy places, an adequate food supply and clean water. The lack of emergency medical care had in some cases resulted in deaths.

11. Israel continued the illegal detention and imprisonment in its jails of thousands of Palestinians, many of whom had been severely harassed, physically abused and even tortured. They were given very limited access to the outside world, including their families and legal representatives, and were being held in the most deplorable and unsanitary conditions. Over 600 of those imprisoned were being held without trial.

12. The widespread destruction of homes and property throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continued unabated as part of Israel's effort to colonize more Palestinian land, particularly through its unlawful construction of the separation wall and its expansion of its network of illegal colonial settlements and bypass roads. Of particular concern was Israel's illegal plan to slice the West Bank in half by constructing thousands of housing units in a corridor between Jerusalem and a West Bank settlement, that would effectively clamp down on Palestinian movement while isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian territory.

13. In July 2004, the International Court of Justice had declared the construction of the separation wall to be in violation of international law. However, rather than dismantling it and making reparation for the damage already done, the occupying Power was continuing to confiscate West Bank land in order to continue construction of the wall, especially in occupied East Jerusalem. The planned route of the wall was twice the length of the 1949 Armistice Line, or the Green Line, and was clearly designed to be the border of the State of Israel. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians now found themselves confined in wall enclaves and thousands more were effectively imprisoned between the wall and the Green Line. With its wall, Israel was also unilaterally defining the permanent borders of a future Palestinian State that would have neither territorial integrity nor territorial contiguity; a two-State solution would thus be nearly impossible. The colonization of Palestinian land and the peace process were incompatible.

14. On the issue of Gaza, the Palestinian Authority considered the dismantling of illegal settlements and the withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces to be an important step towards reversing the Israeli colonization of Palestinian territory. However, the unilateral Israeli disengagement had taken no account of Palestinian concerns and had left many critical issues — such as border crossings and links between Gaza and the West Bank — unresolved. An isolated Gaza would not be economically or politically sustainable. Similar steps had to be taken in the West Bank, including the immediate implementation of the recent political understandings, the implementation of the road map and the immediate resumption of negotiations on final status issues. The withdrawal of Jewish settlers from Gaza did not change the legal status of Gaza as an occupied territory, and the disengagement should be used by Israel as an opportunity to revive the peace process rather than to exploit it as a way of completing de facto annexation of huge areas of the West Bank.

15. The United Nations, in particular, had a critical permanent responsibility to see that the question of Palestine was satisfactorily resolved in all its aspects and to find innovative ways of achieving that result. It must bring the parties back to negotiations on the implementation of the road map and the achievement of a final, peaceful two-State settlement, based on the pre-1967 borders.

16. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, as the eye that exposed Israel's crimes to the international

community, the Special Committee should continue its work until all the occupied Arab territories were returned in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Any weakening of the Special Committee would give Israel camouflage for the further pursuit of its practices and violations of human rights and international law. It had already refused to receive the Special Committee for 37 years. It was therefore essential for the General Assembly to consider innovative ways of assisting the Special Committee to fulfil its mandate. Throughout its occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan, Israel had employed a variety of methods to strip the land, erase the identity of the inhabitants and attract settlers, denying all fundamental freedoms and human rights to the population of the Syrian Golan in the process. It had also attempted to annex the Golan and impose its laws and its jurisdiction over it, even though such measures had been declared by the Security Council to be null and void and without legal effect. Through its expansionist policies and new settlement campaigns, Israel had persistently demonstrated its opposition to peace to the point of publicly stating, inter alia, that not even for that price would the Golan be returned to the Syrian Arab Republic. Such statements represented another serious escalation in the situation and also served as evidence of the Israeli Government's decision to kill the peace process, lay to rest the relevant United Nations resolutions and stall all productive efforts for a just and comprehensive peace in the region, particularly considering the declared willingness of the Syrian Arab Republic to resume that process unconditionally.

17. He drew attention to the examples contained in the report of the Special Committee (A/60/380) of the many ongoing Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan, the pillaging and exploitation of its natural resources and the plunder of its archaeological and cultural heritage, and described his Government's efforts to relieve the persistent shortage of health facilities available to Syrian Arab citizens in the occupied region. Since those citizens insisted that the occupation must eventually end and the land must be returned to its rightful owners, they continued to reject all forms of occupation and the imposition of Israeli identity.

18. As evidenced by the statement of the Observer for Palestine, the tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories was exacerbated by Israel's flagrant violations of human rights and international law, as detailed in the report of the Special Committee. The withdrawal of settlers and Israeli forces from Gaza was merely a first step; the implementation of all United Nations resolutions relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict was also required, along with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and the return of the Palestinian refugees. The time had come for the international community to take a decisive stand concerning those resolutions, which had not been implemented for reasons that were clear to all, primarily the unlimited liberal support and protection afforded by some to the Israeli aggressor against Arab States. The Syrian Arab Republic had repeatedly voiced its commitment to a just and comprehensive peace and continued to demand Israel's withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967, as well as a guarantee of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. To that end it had earnestly joined in the peace negotiations for over a decade. Peace was incompatible with the occupation and any steps to consolidate it. The Syrian Arab Republic therefore appealed to the international community to condemn the Israeli practices in the occupied territories and to demand that the Israeli Government abandon its policies of expansion, annexation and settlement. It also called on the Security Council to implement its resolutions on the Middle East conflict without selectivity or double standards.

19. Mr. Argüello Rodríguez (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

20. **Mr. Hassan** (Jordan) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee, which should continue its work until the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories occupied since 1967 had ended. He called on Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee so as to strengthen its work and ensure that its conclusions encompassed the viewpoints of all the parties concerned. For the past five years, his delegation had reiterated the need for the peace process to be put back on track. Each time that tensions had begun to lessen, however, the two parties would again spiral into violence. The problem was that the continuing Israeli occupation and the appalling living conditions imposed on the Palestinian people caused them to lose almost all hope of a solution that met their aspirations and guaranteed their rights to a life of dignity. Despite the apparently pessimistic outlook, however, it was

important to remain objective and positive, where possible.

21. Israel's withdrawal from Gaza was an important step to build on in implementing the road map and provided an opportunity for the reactivation of the peace process, for which a genuine political will was needed. It was regrettable that a number of the desired outcomes had not been achieved, despite the efforts of the Quartet and all concerned parties. Israel's resumption of military action, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary measures against the Palestinian people, together with its continuing violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, were not conducive to a solution to the crisis or a return to the peace process. He was condemning not so much any particular party as the violence, the violation of the Sharm El Sheikh understandings and all actions which impeded political progress. He condemned the killing of all innocent civilians and called for compliance with those understandings, adherence to the truce, the cessation of violence and the exercise of self-restraint by Israel in particular. The Palestinian Authority was in the throes of reorganizing and reforming its security apparatus and Israel should help to promote that process instead of hampering or thwarting it through uncalculated reactions or the rejection of constructive proposals for the strengthening of the Palestinian security forces. In that context, his Government commended the reform efforts of President Mahmoud Abbas and his commitment to driving forward the political process.

22. The plethora of Israeli violations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people was evident from the report of the Special Committee. Economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories were now critical as a result and had been exacerbated by the continuing construction of the separation wall, which also had immediate repercussions on his own country and threatened its security. It was therefore essential for Israel to respect the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the construction of the wall. He referred to some of the commitments still to be implemented by the Israeli and Palestinian sides under the road map and the Sharm El Sheikh understandings and added that, in the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel should desist from continuing its settlement activity, planting mines and endangering the lives of the Arab population. In short, peace in the Middle East would not be achieved until the Israeli occupation of Arab territories was ended in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Equally, all parties should fulfil their obligations under the road map. The withdrawal from Gaza was a first step towards the realization of the vision of the two-State solution.

23. **Mr. Al Abd** (United Arab Emirates) said that the data contained in the Special Committee's report (A/60/380) reflected the scope of the flagrant violations of the basic human rights of the people living in the occupied Arab territories. For five years, the Israeli occupation forces had been guilty of systematic war crimes and State terrorism against Arab civilians in those territories, using sophisticated weapons and fighter planes and killing some 4,000 persons, including children, women and elderly people, and maiming tens of thousands more. Even after its withdrawal from Gaza and the evacuation of a number of its settlements in the northern part of the West Bank, Israel was continuing to kill civilians, impose collective punishment and carry out extrajudicial executions, destroy thousands of houses, and detain and displace tens of thousands of the population in flagrant violation of all international and humanitarian laws, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention, applicable to those territories, which were still subject to Israel's military control over their borders and trading routes.

24. In patent disregard of international humanitarian law, the international conventions and all relevant international resolutions demanding that Israel withdraw from the territories it had occupied since 1967 and dismantle its separation wall, the Israeli Government was still lengthening the wall and confiscating land and water, bulldozing farmland and restricting the movement of Palestinians, as part of a deliberate plan to aggravate their economic and social situation, force them out of their homes and expand its territory.

25. Israeli policy had resulted in heavy losses to the Palestinian economy, there was a 26 per cent unemployment rate among Palestinians in the occupied territories and 64 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line. In addition there had been a deterioration in health and education services and a severe lack of drinking water. Those factors had resulted in an alarming spread of child malnutrition.

26. Israel also persisted in its occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan, violating the human rights of its Arab population. Its deliberate expansion and its imposition of a Jewish culture on the region were intended to erase the population's Arab identity, in blatant violation of the relevant international resolutions.

27. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian people in their struggle against Israeli occupation and for their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. It urged the international community to compel Israel to end forthwith its aggression and its massacre of the Palestinian people and to abide by the relevant provisions of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and to comply with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

28. It also urged the United Nations to take the measures needed to protect the Palestinian people and to deliver humanitarian assistance to them, and to continue to support the work of the Special Committee until the total elimination of the Israeli occupation and the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East problem.

29. *Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan) resumed the Chair.*

30. **Mr. Adel** (Egypt) said that, as reflected in the report of the Special Committee and the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (A/60/271), the Israeli Government had no respect for the human rights of the Arab people in the occupied territories, where its practices violated all human rights instruments and norms. The hopes raised by the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza had soon dissipated in the light of Gaza's gradual transformation into a vast prison following the deliberate severance of its ties with the outside world; the curfews, closures and collective punishment; the construction of the separation wall; the expansion of settlements in the West Bank; and the obliteration of the Palestinian character of Jerusalem. The separation wall was designed to isolate the Palestinian people with the ultimate aim of destroying their political, social and economic unity on spurious security grounds that had no connection with what was happening on the ground. He therefore supported the recommendation that the General Assembly should monitor the implementation of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and General Assembly resolution ES-10/15. The occupying Power also imposed mobility restrictions on the Palestinian people, frequently prevented them from performing religious observances and deprived them of many other fundamental rights guaranteed under international human rights instruments. Since the construction of the wall, for instance, the Palestinians no longer had control over such strategic and vital resources as water and electricity, supplies of which were instead diverted for the benefit of Israeli settlers. Israel also continued to take legislative and administrative measures and actions to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan. No positive results were gained by such policies, which equally failed to achieve Israel's desired security objective; instead, they merely exacerbated the poor living conditions of the Palestinian people and strengthened their resolve to acquire their full rights, in particular the right to self-determination. The plan for disengagement and withdrawal from Gaza was an initial step that should be followed by further steps on the basis of the road map and the vision of the two-State solution. The concerted efforts of the international community and the guaranteed implementation of each party's commitments were essential to that end. Egypt would continue to work assiduously with all parties for the achievement of that aim and for the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

31. **Mr. Al-Otaibi** (Kuwait) said that the suffering caused to the Palestinian people by the arbitrary and inhumane Israeli practices detailed in the report of the Special Committee had been compounded by the construction of the separation wall, the negative repercussions of which were explicitly described in the report. Israel's continuation of those practices and its determination to pursue its construction of the wall in disregard of United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice constituted a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan, which he condemned, also represented a similar violation. Significant as they were, however, the efforts of the Quartet and various regional and international parties had regrettably failed to halt the Israeli Government's obdurate pursuit of its policy and its refusal to conduct itself in a civilized and reasonable manner. Israel's

withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was a first step that should be followed by further steps, in particular those designed to secure an end to Israel's control of crossing points and airspace and the removal of all restrictions on the reopening of the Gaza port and airport. Israel should then complete its withdrawal by ending the occupation of all remaining Palestinian and Arab territories.

32. He reaffirmed Kuwait's firm and principled stand in support of the Palestinian people in their struggle to obtain their legitimate rights to autonomy and the establishment of an independent State on their own soil, with Jerusalem as its capital. He also reaffirmed its ongoing support for the work of the Special Committee, which should continue until such time as the Israeli occupation was fully ended. He endorsed the recommendations and conclusions contained in the report of the Special Committee and called on the Israeli Government to implement those recommendations and cooperate with the Special Committee. He further called on the international community to exert greater pressure on the Israeli Government to persuade it to stop its flagrant violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied territories, fulfil its obligations under the road map and implement the relevant United Nations resolutions in the interests of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

33. **Mr. La Rosa Dominguez** (Cuba) reaffirmed his delegation's full support for the Special Committee, which had always provided the international community with valuable information on the abuses committed against the Palestinian people in their own land under Israeli occupation. Recapitulating the accusations levelled at Israel in the Special Committee's report, he said that an entire people was being blatantly and systematically massacred while the international community, its hands tied, could not implement effective measures. There had been 30 actual or threatened vetoes in the Security Council of draft resolutions aimed at finding a balanced approach to the situation. The usual double standard and the exercise or threat of a veto by one of its permanent members had brought the Council to a standstill on the issue.

34. Not only had one delegation in the past made disgraceful statements in the Special Committee, declaring that one of its objectives was to do away with it, but it had even published that objective on its web page and in official documents, thereby demonstrating its disrespect for the lives and rights of the Palestinian people. It had now gone on to issue dangerous statements within the Organization on the alleged need to eliminate some of the entities created to contribute to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. His delegation feared that that might spread to other entities, such as the Special Committee, and once more condemned those statements.

35. As the report showed, the expectations raised by Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip were fading with the continued military occupation of the West Bank, the lengthening of the separation wall, the violations of freedom of movement, the incredible number of Palestinians still in Israeli jails, the constant expansion of Jewish settlements into Palestinian territory, and the international community's silence and inaction on the lack of compliance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The Committee should not be fooled by the recent unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza or the evacuation of Jewish settlements in the area; they neither constituted the beginning of the end of Israel's genocidal policy nor heralded a definitive solution to the Palestinian issue. Israel was still the occupying Power, controlling air space, land borders and the sea.

36. In conclusion, he reaffirmed Cuba's support for the Palestinian people's inalienable right to an independent and sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital. It demanded the unconditional return of all Israeli-occupied Arab territories and stressed the illegality of all Israeli settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967. The Arab peoples could count on the full support of the Cuban people in their quest for a just, unconditional, comprehensive and lasting peace.

37. **Mr. Mohd Radzi** Abdul Rahman (Malaysia) said that the report of the Special Committee contained disturbing accounts of the unprecedented level of physical destruction in the occupied Arab territories, as well as the loss of control by the Palestinians of strategic resources and of the contiguity of their lands, owing to the separation wall, road closures and checkpoints and the encroachment of Israeli settlements. The policies and practices of the Israeli Government had further aggravated the already serious humanitarian and human rights situation of the Palestinians.

38. Israel's persistent refusal to cooperate with the Special Committee in the fulfilment of its mandate was counterproductive, in that it deprived itself of the opportunity to explain its position to the Special Committee. Israel's refusal to comply with the Secretary-General's request for information on its progress in implementing the five relevant General Assembly resolutions was also disturbing. Its negative attitude and posturing merely corroborated the suggestion that Israel was deliberately preventing the international community from discovering the real humanitarian and human rights situation in the occupied territories. Given the Special Committee's meticulous efforts to ensure the independence, impartiality and accuracy of its work, Israel could hardly accuse it of biased reporting. In that regard, he drew Israel's attention to the conclusion contained in paragraph 116 of the Special Committee's report (A/60/380).

39. The degree and manner of the gross human rights violations and the suffering caused by the Israeli occupation must be stopped; they constituted flagrant violations of the Charter of the United Nations, long-standing and more recent international conventions and covenants, and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel must be made to understand that it was not above the law and must fulfil its obligations under international law like every other Member of the United Nations.

40. The ongoing destruction caused by the separation wall was another factor that undermined the population's humanitarian and human rights and had turned the territory into a vast open-air prison unprecedented in modern times. The wall was an unmistakeable act of territorial annexation in the guise of self-defence and security. Israel must comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court and with General Assembly resolution ES-10/15, which called on Israel, inter alia, to make reparation for all damage caused by its construction.

41. Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank had been a positive step in the peace process, but harsh repressive measures against the Palestinians had intensified with the second intifada, including the recent executions in Gaza, and had further damaged the deprived and oppressed population. Israel's many restrictive regimes demonstrated the occupying Power's desire systematically to control and regulate the lives of the inhabitants of the occupied territories and to subject them to its will. The international community must express its outrage at the relentless continuation of those regimes and must explore other ways of redressing the situation without delay.

42. He urged Member States to reach out to their media and civil society organizations to give greater attention to the question of Palestine. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the dissemination by the Department of Public Information of regular bulletins on events in the occupied territories through its global and system-wide apparatus, and recommended that such activities should be expanded. As Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, Malaysia had spearheaded the mobilization of global public opinion, drawing inspiration from the global anti-apartheid movement, in order to increase awareness of the complexity of the question of Palestine and the situation in the occupied territories. The Malaysian non-governmental organization Peace Malaysia had organized an international conference on peace in Palestine in Kuala Lumpur in March and the Malaysian media had given wide coverage to developments there.

43. The faint hope of the Palestinians and Arabs in the occupied territories that their plight might be reversed by the implementation of the road map had vanished with Israel's refusal to comply with its provisions. Their hopes now lay with the international community, which must not ignore them; it must do its utmost to prevail upon Israel to change its policy, and must ensure that all relevant parties implemented and monitored the Special Committee's recommendations.

44. The Special Committee was an independent and indispensable body which could provide the international community with first-hand information on the humanitarian and human rights situation in the occupied territories. It must be allowed to continue its mandate, pending the cessation of Israel's human rights violations and occupation. He urged Member States to support the relevant draft resolutions as they had rightly done in the past.

45. **Mr. Yechury** (India) said that Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank had been a significant first step towards what he hoped would be a mutually acceptable negotiated settlement in line with the road map and the relevant Security Council resolutions and towards the eventual establishment of a sovereign, independent and

viable Palestinian State within well-defined, secure borders and at peace with Israel. India, however, unequivocally condemned the persistence of a fragile situation marked by acts of terrorism and excessively harsh retaliatory measures. All parties concerned must exercise restraint, abjure violence and return to the negotiating table. To deny the right to self-determination of the Palestinians was also to deny the right to life of the Israelis: two reinforcing concepts that must be neutralized.

46. The human rights of the Palestinian people were the focus of the report of the Special Committee (A/60/380), which had drawn attention to the violations of the social and economic rights of the people in the occupied territories that were often disposed in the interest of power or geopolitics. The lives of those people had become a metaphor, as well as a reality, of misery and injustice, in which the concept of "home" was a travesty.

47. The construction of the separation wall violated every right of the Palestinians. No one could object to the construction of the wall in areas coinciding with the Green Line, but its encroachment on Palestinian land and interests brought great hardship for the people and exacerbated the situation. If construction was allowed to continue, it threatened to prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations between the parties. He therefore reiterated his appeal to Israel to take note, in particular, of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15, which was based on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice to the effect that the wall was contrary to international law.

48. Of equal concern were the restrictions on the Palestinians' freedom of movement, which had cut off their access to employment, income and essential goods and services and had also seriously hampered the ability of United Nations humanitarian agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to provide essential services. India called upon Israel to show restraint and do nothing to aggravate the humanitarian and economic plight of the Palestinian people.

49. India's support for the Palestinian cause and a Palestinian homeland had always been strong. It had extended material and technical assistance to the people of Palestine to help them towards self-government and nation-building in areas such as telecommunications, software, pharmaceuticals and higher education and training, and it had recently pledged $15 million to the Palestinian Authority. India was committed to a negotiated two-State solution agreed between the parties that would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security, and it reaffirmed that the road map was the fundamental framework for an early, good faith resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.